

# THE MENACE OF FASCISM

by

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PART I

THE NATURE OF FAŞCISM



## CHAPTER I

### FASCISM

“THE WOMAN, a humble working-class creature to whom not even the Press of the Right troubles to attach the label ‘Communist,’ failed, in the laconic words of a Nationalist news agency, ‘to obey the shouted command “All windows closed” from Nazis in the street outside. She put her head out of her window and was immediately shot.’”—*The Times*, February 3rd.

“I have seen at the St. Antonius Hospital in Karlshorst, Frau Marie Jankowski, aged forty-six, who was taken by men in Nazi uniform from her dwelling in Cöpenick in the small hours of March 21st, stripped, and beaten.

“Frau Jankowski said that she and her family were awakened by imperative shouts of ‘Police: open the door,’ accompanied by threats to shoot. On opening, fourteen men in Nazi uniform, with carbines and revolvers, entered and searched the flat and took her to Nazi premises in the Dorotheenstrasse. She was

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are dragged from their beds and simply disappear so thoroughly that even the police cannot find out where they are.”—*The Times*, March 13th.

“At Schweinfurth a Nazi shot dead his brother, whose political sympathies were with the Left.”—*The Times*, March 14th.

“A number of Brown Shirts arrested a Socialist, Mr. —, early one morning in his own home. He was taken to a ‘Brown House’ (as Nazi headquarters are called) near by. He was ordered to stand facing a wall with his hands clasped over his head. He was then beaten with riding-whips, most of the blows descending on his head and hands. He was then pinioned and taken before a court martial.

“On either side of the ‘judge’ there was a Brown Shirt armed with a pistol. The victim was then cross-examined as to his party, its leaders, where documents could be found, and so on. Whenever his replies were considered unsatisfactory, he was beaten. He was told that he had once kicked a Brown Shirt downstairs. When he denied this he was again beaten.

“He was then taken to another room, where a number of fellow prisoners were waiting. They had all been beaten, and their faces and

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heads were bleeding. The faces of some had been beaten almost to a raw pulp. One of them had a smashed eye and another was lying on the floor so injured that he could not rise.

“ Another Socialist, Mr. —, was arrested in the street by Brown Shirts, ordered into a sidecar—a Brown Shirt with a revolver was on the pillion—and taken to the Brown House in the Hedemannstrasse (the most notorious of the Brown Houses in Berlin—innumerable persons have been beaten and tortured there).

“ He was taken to a room littered with straw. Two other prisoners were there. One of them, apparently a Bulgarian, had been so injured that his condition was critical. Mr. — was then made to go through some military drill (standing to attention, lying down, getting up, and so on). He was then beaten with a rubber truncheon wound round with wire. He was made to repair the torn uniform of a Brown Shirt and again beaten.

“ A young workman, a Socialist and a member of the Reichbanner, was arrested by four Nazis (three of them wore the Brown uniform). They all had revolvers. He was taken to a room in a public-house near by. When about twenty prisoners had been brought in, they were all ordered to go through their military

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" (3) Herr Krell, a young East European Jew.

" He disappeared in a similar way, and all endeavours to find him were without avail. A few days later his family received a telephone message from the Brown House to the effect that he had thrown himself from a window on the fourth floor and been killed.

" (4) A Jewish merchant, F., of Dolgesheim.

" In 1930 was compelled by Nazi terrorism to flee for safety to Worms, where he remained. Two weeks ago he was dragged from his home at Worms by Storm Troopers and taken back in a motor-car to Dolgesheim. There, after brutal treatment, he was hanged.

" (5) A Jewish cattle-dealer, O. S., of Straubing (Lower Bavaria).

" He was dragged out of bed early in the morning by uniformed Storm Troopers and taken in an open motor-car to the Dreifaltigkeitsberg, between Mangkofen and Worth, where he was shot."—*Sunday Times*, April 2nd.

" The anti-Semitic outrages of the last few weeks are far more horrible than could reasonably have been imagined at first. Nothing like

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them has been known in Germany for generations.

“In cities of Eastern Europe, where there is extreme poverty and overcrowding, where the Jewish population is very big (in Warsaw it is about a third of the whole), where there is a desperate struggle for bare existence, and where there is deep ignorance, illiteracy, and the most primitive prejudices and superstitions, anti-Semitic riots are at least not wholly unnatural, even if they cannot be excused; but in Germany, which has as high a standard of education as any country in the world and a far higher living standard than any Eastern country, where there is little overcrowding, where the Jews, who number only one in a hundred of the population, have contributed immensely to its material and spiritual wealth, so that the non-Jewish German is the richer, not the poorer, for their presence, the excesses of the last few weeks are far more shameful than any that have occurred farther east—all the more so because it is not the poor but the rich who are mainly responsible for them.”—*Manchester Guardian*, March 25th.

“The crimes committed (and still going on) in the town of Cassel have just come beneath the notice of your correspondent. He can give

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names and particulars of a dozen beatings that left the victims bruised, bleeding, and lacerated human wrecks, with minds dazed or blank. The beatings were carried out systematically and according to a general plan—general, that is to say, for all Germany—in the Brown Homes that are nothing less than torture-chambers. They were not carried out in the heat of a political struggle but in cold blood, and on victims who were helpless and who were found guilty of no offence whatever.

“Your correspondent is wholly unable to make any guess at the number of men and women who have been systematically beaten by Brown Shirts since the last election, but the estimate of an eminent Conservative who is in close touch with the Nationalist members of the German Government, and certainly more sympathetic to the Right than to the Left, may perhaps be of some interest. His figure is 20,000. Such a guess must necessarily be wholly tentative, for most of the beatings have remained secret, and will probably remain secret for ever.”—*Manchester Guardian*, April 12th.

“A well-known Jewish lawyer of Chemnitz, Dr. Weiner, was on Tuesday night taken from his dwelling by men in Nazi uniform, driven away in a motor-car, and was found dead from



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bullet wounds in the countryside yesterday morning. Dr. Weiner had served with distinction in the war.”—*The Times*, April 13th.

“A medical certificate relating to the condition of another woman victim (her name must be withheld for the time being) states that she has festering abscesses and erosions and strip-shaped scars all over her body. These injuries were inflicted with the ‘steel wand’ commonly used by the Brown Shirts. She was beaten in the Brown Barracks in the Swinemundestrasse (Berlin), but she refused to reveal the name of a friend of hers for whom the Brown Shirts were looking.

“Precise particulars relating to many other victims who were tortured in the Brown Houses of Berlin are in the possession of your correspondent. Many of the details are unprintable. The number of persons beaten to death appears to be considerable, though the Brown Shirts often take the precaution of having a doctor in attendance, who feels the pulse of the victim. The purpose of the torture is not so much to kill as to wreak vengeance on a defeated political foe and to terrorize both the victim himself and all his acquaintances.”—*Manchester Guardian*, April 15th.

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“ The barbaric tortures inflicted in the Brown Houses go on as before. Hardly less inhuman are the “ clean-ups ” (*Säuberungsaktionen*) in the German Civil Service, the municipalities, hospitals, law courts, schools, and so on. What becomes of the vast multitude of those who are dismissed every day? Nobody seems to know or to bother.

“ Thousands upon thousands of German families have been totally ruined since the beginning of March. Their despair has to be seen before it can be realized, and anyone with the slightest sense of the tragic will be struck by the suicidal gloom and despondence in so many Berlin faces to-day. Men and women of the highest distinction in art, letters, science, medicine, law, and business are destitute, careers have been abruptly ended, the work and devotion of whole lifetimes have been undone and rewarded by dismissal.

“ To glance through a series of the ‘ *Städtische Nachrichtendienst* ’ is to perceive not only an immense human tragedy (no wonder there are so many suicides in Berlin) but also the steep decline of a civilization that until only a few weeks ago was one of the highest in the world.”—*Manchester Guardian*, April 19th.

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“Several Jewish suicides are reported ; at Frankfort-on-the-Oder a Jewish shopkeeper and his wife ; at Chemnitz a partner in a well-known textile firm ; in Berlin a lawyer who ‘ could not bear any longer the development of recent days ’ and a judge who had been displaced. Dr. Joachim, the Berlin Jewish lawyer, who was reported on March 20th to have been taken from his dwelling ‘ by persons unknown ’ and on March 31st ‘ to have died after a week’s illness,’ was cremated to-day.”—*The Times*, April 6th.

“The ‘ Brown Terror ’ is, both for the number of the victims and for the inhumanity of the methods used, one of the most frightful atrocities of modern times, and in no way comparable with the Red Terror of revolutionary Russia or France, because it is not an instrument used under the compulsion of a struggle for life or death.

“The alternative to those two Red Terrors was a White Terror ; but to the Brown Terror (which is a variety of the White) there was no alternative Terror, for at no time were the Nazis oppressed, or in danger of oppression by their opponents when they were in power, as the Nazis are oppressing their opponents now

that these are prostrate.”—*Manchester Guardian*, March 28th.

“The treasurer of Düsseldorf, Dr. Odenkirchen, hanged himself in the room of the Town Hall, where he was confined during the night. At Krefeld, another big Ruhr city, the deputy mayor, Dr. Beyer, committed suicide, the grounds being unknown, as did also a lawyer imprisoned at Dortmund, Dr. Elias, who is said to have been suspected of tax evasion, and an official of the Berlin sickness insurance department, Herr Ebel, who had been put in *Schutzhaft* (‘Protective’ custody).”—*The Times*, April 15th.

“The Brown Terror grows worse every day. It has become a war of extermination, waged by the Brown Shirts against the entire Left. All trade unionists, Liberals, pacifists, Socialists, Communists, and internationalists who were in any way prominent as organizers, writers, speakers, even if only in some local branch, some village, or some street, are throughout the greater part of Germany menaced by dismissal, by physical torture, or imprisonment. The persecution of the Jews is a kind of subsidiary campaign in this war. Whoever remains obdurate—and there are such—is converted

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from a moderate to an extremist, from a reformist to a revolutionary. This is also true of many who have passed over under threat of victimization or when broken by torture but have nevertheless retained their old opinions. So frightful is the penalty of heroism that no one is blamed for not being a hero, though he who is, becomes an object of awe. No doubt the iron band of heroes that is now being created will formidably assert itself some day.

“In the early days of the Terror—that is to say, in the first half of March—the cries of the tortured could be heard in the streets outside some of the Brown Homes. Precautions have been taken to avoid such publicity and not a sound reaches the outer world now. The most absolute secrecy is imposed on everyone throughout the country. The tortured are made to swear that they will never, under threat of death or renewed torture, say a word to anyone; many are even forced to sign statements that they have been well treated.

“The terror is so frightful and the number of victims so enormous that it cannot be kept secret, either in Germany or abroad. The many thousands whose backs are raw, whose heads are bandaged, whose faces are scarred, whose bones or teeth broken, who lie in hospital with knife wounds, bullet wounds, or

horrible contusions, who limp along the streets—all these are evidence enough, even if, when asked what is the matter, they reply with no more than a terrified look.”—*Manchester Guardian*, April 20th.

“Another prominent German politician has died—Dr. Eckstein, a Breslau lawyer and former Socialist Deputy, who led the secession of a small group of Deputies from this party and formed a new one under the name of the Socialist Labour party. Dr. Eckstein had lately been in *Schutzhaft*, which is variously defined as meaning custody for the protection of the community or of the individual himself, and actually means indefinite detention without the preferment of charges. He is now stated to have died of ‘inflammation of the lungs and kidneys and incipient madness.’ ”—*The Times*, May 9th.

“The German working class is now dominated by an intense mass emotion compounded of fear (a fear that is only too justified) and a controlled fury. A hatred such as never existed before in Germany has been aroused. A passionate longing which your correspondent has often observed amongst the oppressed of Eastern Europe is now deeply engrafted in the

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consciousness of the most pacific and most internationally minded class in the world—namely, the German industrial labour: the longing that there may be another war. War may shake the Hitlerite dictatorship, and in any case weapons will pass into the hands of the workmen, whose dream is now to possess a rifle or a carbine some day for use not abroad, but at home.

“Perhaps the future historian will see in the agony under the Brown Terror the birth-pangs of the German revolution—a revolution compared with which the upheaval of 1918 will seem a mild reform.”—*Manchester Guardian*, March 28th.

(All the dates in this chapter refer to the year 1933.)

## CHAPTER II

# THE CENTURY OF THE GREAT HOPE

*"We belong to a youth without hope in the future and without happiness in the present."*

(Extract from the letter  
of a young German of 1932).

FOR MORE than a hundred years we have lived in and by a great hope. So natural, so universal, has been this hope that it is only now, when it threatens to leave us, that we have become conscious of its existence. During all this time, in Western Europe since the French Revolution, in America since the Declaration of Independence, in Britain since the great Reform Bill, it has been possible for the mass of mankind to hope and to aspire. At the back of the minds of nearly every man, encouraging his toil, reconciling him to life's hardships, sustaining his energy, has been the belief that slowly, gradually, but surely, with only temporary setbacks, things would get better—if not for him, then for his children. In that hope and that faith we have all found



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it possible to live, work and have our being.

Nor did this hope lack substance and basis. During the last century, in the favoured countries of the West, the conditions of life for many millions did undoubtedly improve. Over and above this material improvement, the obstacles to a far greater, far swifter, improvement in material conditions seemed one by one to be giving way. Liberty, democracy, were step by step achieved. Soon after the beginning of the twentieth century, political power had, it was believed, been entirely vested, by means of the universal franchise, in the hands of the whole people. The hope of swift educational progress, of the dawn of true liberty, of equality of opportunity, of the gradual abolition of force and violence from the life of society, of the possibility of international peace, of the general broadening of the physical and cultural benefits of civilization till they touched the whole community—the hope of all this seemed brighter and surer than at any time before in human history.

We called our hope “the belief in the inevitability of progress.” Such a faith was strongest in the people, in that overwhelming majority of the population, who worked with their hands or their heads. The higher layers of the social pinnacle had less to hope for and more to fear.

But however much the privileged might seem to ignore and the intellectuals might smile at the people's belief in progress, it pervaded their consciousness also. They could neither jeer at nor ignore the tangible facts of progress. Millions of men and women were becoming better fed, better clothed, better housed: hundreds of thousands began to grasp at knowledge through the new opportunities of education. Tolerance and argument seemed slowly to gain new ground from tyranny and persecution.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, as the years went by, in spite of wars and rumours of wars, of unemployment, of every check and difficulty, the belief in progress found constant sustenance in the forward march of science. For, beneath all the other manifestations of progress, there thundered the march of science and its application

<sup>1</sup> There is no need to discuss here the large admixture of illusion, which was contained in the great hope of the last century. The substantial rise in the level of civilization, both material and cultural, achieved by the peoples of the West, was largely, in fact, achieved at the expense of the peoples of the East. The prosperity of many British workers depended upon the degradation of millions of foreign unskilled labourers. The Lancashire cotton operatives' standard of life could rise simultaneously with the Lancashire mill owners' profits, only because the Bengali was held prostrate in his abject poverty. But this did not affect the psychology of the British people, for they were unconscious of this fact.

Moreover, this indirect exploitation of one race by another, which invisibly but effectively sucked away the nourishment of whole subcontinents for the benefit of the peoples of the great Empires, was not effected without a continual resort to violence. War, in the century of the great hope, was, though nobody paid much attention

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to the production of wealth. Every decade the pace quickened. Every year some new victory was won in man's struggle to wrest a living from the indifferent forces of nature. And everyone knew at the back of his mind, though he was not always clearly conscious of it, that it was this technical progress, freeing the vast majority of men step by step from the necessity of endless drudgery, which alone made possible all the other advances. It was the wealth and the leisure created by the new machines which made everything else possible.

And on the whole and in spite of recurrent crises, which, without explanation, would interrupt the forward movement and throw a momentary shadow of premonition across the scene, it was possible to use the new machines. The economic system, call it "capitalism," "private enterprise," "the profits system," call

to this fact, nearly always raging somewhere in the world. These wars, however, seldom came very near the homes of the Western peoples. To Britain, they came not at all ; and to America, only once upon the grand scale.

It would not be difficult to multiply the factors which qualified the progress of the last century, even within the dominant Empires, to show the arrest of the rise in real wages which occurred in 1900, and which was met by the increasingly violent industrial and political struggles of 1911 to 1914 ; to trace the stealthy growth of unemployment, that nightmare of modern industrial workers, which was always present from 1907 onwards. All these qualifications are not, however, relevant to our present purpose. For, however substantial they were, they did not in fact succeed in shaking men's profound and almost universal belief in progress. And it is with the existence of this belief that we are concerned.

it what you will, worked. It produced at all times what many considered to be intolerable injustices : but it did not, in the great favoured Empires of the West, produce intolerable economic disasters for society as a whole. What many hoped for most was, to be sure, that this system would be increasingly modified : that the undeniably bad side of it, its crass injustices, its senseless deprivations, its jostling maladjustments, should be abolished. And it seemed to nearly everyone that by means of steadily applied reforms, by the suspension of the laws of the profit system in favour of more humanitarian principles at certain critical points, by the provision, for example, of insurances, pensions, safeguards against sweated wages and the like, this would be accomplished.

Every man or woman who came to adult consciousness before the war was born into a world where the attitude of mind, " the mental climate," which we have attempted to define above, was of the very air about them. Nor did the outbreak of the war in itself kill the belief in progress. In many respects, indeed, the years immediately after the war marked the very zenith of that belief. For, if the period of 1917 to 1924 was the period of revolution in Russia, of serious social disturbances elsewhere, and of the triumph of reaction in Hungary and

Italy, yet, in the Western world, the progressive and democratic movement appeared to enjoy an almost unqualified triumph.

In Britain, universal franchise was conceded (although not completely till 1925). For a short period, from 1918 until 1921, a whole new series of social reforms, insurances, guaranteed wages, legal limitations of hours, extensions of educational facilities, etc., were enacted. In Germany, a semi-feudal Empire fell and an ultra-liberal republic was established. Large parts of the former Austrian Empire, including Austria itself, came under the forms of republican government. Above all, on the initiative of the most powerful of all republics, acting under the most typically progressive and democratic of its presidents, the League of Nations was founded. The supreme aspiration of the century of hope, the dream of permanent peace, was, it seemed to millions upon millions who cheered the passing carriage of Woodrow Wilson in the capitals of Europe, at last to be given shape and reality. To the majority of men and women, in America, Great Britain, France and Germany, it seemed for that brief moment that all was well with the world.

The war had been a frightful and gigantic tragedy—but an accidental one. It had not broken the essential basis of democratic and

progressive civilization, or set any barriers against the hope of swift advance in the immediate future. It had not been fought in vain; it had destroyed the last barriers which stood in the way of progress. The war had not made it impossible for the common man to hope. The victory of the Western Democracies seemed to have but confirmed his right to aspire. For a short and, as we look back upon it, unspeakably tragic moment, the peoples of the West, exhausted and bleeding, looked forward with unexampled hope and trust towards a future—which is the present.

. . . . .

For the people of Great Britain, the possibility of hope, the belief in the reality of progress, has expressed itself in definite, though changing, political forms. So broad, so universal, an attitude of mind did not find expression in any one single political party. The Liberal party was in the nineteenth century, and in the early twentieth century, the main repository of the unshakable belief of the vast majority of the British people that change and improvement would and should go steadily forward. In fact, however, between the eighteen-forties—the date of the last throw of Chartism and of the completion by Sir Robert

Peel, the leader of the Conservative party, of the Free Trade system—and the nineteen-twenties, all British political parties had been Liberal parties. For, whatever political differences—and they have been sharp enough in their way—the British people have had, the great hope has occupied the minds of every class in the community. From one extreme of the social scale to the other, there existed the faith that a general improvement in the conditions of the life of all of us had taken place, was taking place, and ought to be accelerated. This faith radiated out from the growing and thriving commercial and industrial middle class. But to an extraordinary extent it dominated the minds of the whole people. It dominated the minds of even those millions of the worst-paid workers who were given but the slenderest material basis for hope and confidence.

Mr. Balfour, the aristocratic leader of the Conservative party, felt, no doubt, little urgency in the matter. He used to tell the House of Commons that the whole task of modern statesmanship was to ensure such social stability, that science would, unhindered and undisturbed, increase the standard of living of the masses to undreamt of heights. Certainly Mr. Balfour felt that there was no occasion to

hurry matters : but he contemplated the prospect of change and general betterment for the whole population with equanimity. Certainly the miner, hewing at the coal face, felt a bitter need for change. He engaged in desperate industrial struggles to improve his lot. And he gradually came to the conclusion that certain political and economic reforms had to be made before the vast improvement in his conditions which he demanded could be effected. But he had this in common with Mr. Balfour : he too was sure that change, progress, improvement, had taken place and would continue to take place. He grew increasingly aware of the need for action on his part in order to make them take place. Yet he worked and found life a tolerable thing, sustained by confidence and hope.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century the quality, the colour, as it were, of the hopes and aspirations of the British people has been changing. This change has been reflected in the rapid decline of the Liberal party and the equally rapid rise of the Labour party. This event, however, did not mean that the British people had abandoned its hope and expectation of uninterrupted progress. This new political party, composed mainly, though not wholly, of the working class, was pledged to achieve a rapid and immediate improvement in



living conditions at home, and to organize, together with corresponding parties in other countries, permanent and stable international peace abroad. Its rise marked the fact that a great part of the British people felt that the main obstacles which had long stood in the way of the realization of their high hopes, had at last been removed.

The technical, physical, obstacles to peace and plenty for all were obviously falling—in fact, they had already fallen. It was perfectly clear, to every industrial worker at least, that science had at length put such productive power into men's hands that there remained no reason at all why anyone should lack the necessities of life. And at the same time the political obstacles, which had long stood in the way of the realization of the will of the people, seemed also to have disappeared. The veto of the hereditary House of Lords had been removed : the vote was at last coming into the hands of every adult man and woman. All but one (the annual election of new parliaments) of the demands which the Chartist great-grandfather of the present generation of the British workers had fought for, had been won. The Chartists had fought for these demands—manhood suffrage, the ballot, annual parliaments, equal electoral districts, payment of

members, abolition of the property qualification for Parliament—not because they valued these constitutional principles in themselves, but because they believed them to be the infallible keys which would unlock the doors to plenty, opportunity, justice and equality for the British people.

In the early nineteen-twenties the passionate hope of a whole century seemed to be upon the point of fulfilment. Nor was it the working class alone which, twelve years ago, looked forward confidently to a golden era. The lower middle class and even the younger generation of the ruling class, shared in their expectation. For their expectation was clearly justified. The definite, undeniable possibility of a steady advance in the living conditions of the whole people was surely and solidly based on the facts of technical progress. For the first time in human history, it was visibly, unquestionably, possible for the nation to feed, clothe and house itself on an unprecedentedly high standard, and yet to enjoy an abundant leisure. (The late Lord Leverhulme, for example, used to tell us that six hours of work a day would, even at the technical level of twenty years ago, amply suffice to provide us with universal plenty.)

Nor was the hope of international peace, which was perhaps even more widely shared, to

which large sections of the Conservative party, for example, sincerely adhered, any less solidly grounded on fact. The growth of the possibilities of intercommunication between nation and nation was, if anything, more striking than the increase in the possibilities of wealth production. It was not so much a question of the spectacular new means of communication, the aeroplane and the wireless, as of an immense growth in the technical facilities of world trade and world travel. Transport and communication had become so cheap and so sure that the world had been united economically. Its gradual political organization, through the League of Nations, the Permanent Court of International Justice, and other such international institutions, seemed a logical and inevitable sequel.

Twelve years ago this was the outlook upon the world of the British people.

What is that outlook to-day? That is a far harder question to answer. For the past twelve years have been for the people of Britain years of disillusionment and frustration. Abroad, they have seen failure after inexplicable failure in the organization of peace and disarmament. At home, their long, slow advance from the misery and destitution of the first decades of industrialism has been abruptly checked.

Until four years ago it seemed that a period of steady but gradual contraction had set in. But, in 1929, unemployment suddenly towered up to nightmare heights. The gains of a generation of working-class struggle began to melt away. Nor has it been the workers alone who have suffered a sharp reversal of fortune. Every class in the community, except the richest, has begun to feel the effects of the contraction of the whole British economic system. And this has been, for a people which for a hundred years has known only advance and expansion, a dreadful and bewildering experience.

What has been the effect of all this upon the psychology of the British people? Slowly, piecemeal, first in the worst-affected towns and counties, spreading gradually over the country, has come a wholly new mood. For the first time in the memory of man, the British people have begun to doubt the future.

As yet, however, the mood of doubt has only begun. Everywhere men and women are still clinging to the hope of betterment: they will not admit the facts of decay around them. A great part of the British people, of all social classes, still obstinately cling to the expectation of a new period of social progress. And it is only natural that they should do so. For they

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can see that such a period is to-day, more than ever before, a physical possibility. Whatever has happened, whatever anyone can say, we all know that our powers of production have made peace, plenty and security ours for the taking. The whole dreadful frustration, failure and disorder of these latter years must be only, many people still resolve, some strange temporary aberration—some painful halt at the very gateway to the fulfilment of all our hopes. They think with Mr. J. M. Keynes that our whole present plight must be nothing but “a frightful muddle, a transitory and unnecessary muddle.” Perhaps half the British people—the half upon whom the conditions of the last years have borne most heavily—have begun to doubt. Half, the more fortunate half, still perhaps believe in progress : still live, work and have their being sustained by the hope of general betterment.

. . . . .  
Of such a kind has been the prevailing outlook of the British people until the spring of the year 1933. There then occurred an event which profoundly altered the whole situation of the civilized world. Fascism was given power in Germany : was given power, that is to say, in the heart of Europe, in one of the great, advanced, industrial nations of the world.

We are slowly realizing that the handing over of power in the German Reich by President von Hindenburg and his advisers to the German Fascist party was a world event of supreme importance. For it will be found on examination that the simplest and least questionable description of Fascism is to say that it is the exact opposite, the direct negation, the deadly and remorseless enemy, of that whole progressive movement of hope and aspiration which we have attempted to define above.

Fascism denies every one of the assumptions upon which the progressive movement is based. Fascism proclaims, as it will be easy to establish both from Fascist words and Fascist deeds, that the whole great hope, by the light of which the peoples of the West have lived for a century, is a great illusion : that Democracy is a decaying corpse ; international peace, a coward's dream ; equality of opportunity, a chimera ; the conquest of poverty, a futile vision.

Fascism<sup>f</sup> proclaims a society rigidly and eternally divided into social classes, the one governing, educated, economically secure, with all the resources of civilization at its command ; the other, governed, poor and dedicated to a life of unthinking and unhoping toil.

Above all, Fascism proclaims the necessity

and excellence of war. War and the preparation of war are to become the most sacred duties of human life. Men must find in death and mutilation the true purpose of their lives, and women must rejoice to exhaust themselves in childbirth that ever new generations of men may take their places upon the battlefield.

Such is the very kernel and heart of Fascist theory. But Fascist theory is entirely subordinate to Fascist practice. And Fascist practice has shown itself everywhere intent to kill, to shoot from ambush, to stab under cover of the night, to bludgeon to pulp, or to kidnap and to torture, every single man or woman who holds to the belief in the twin possibilities of peace and progress.

Fascism must kill, if it can, anyone who dares to tell us that our century-old hopes were justified, that our great machines do here and now make possible a free, peaceful and civilized life for all of us. For anyone who tells us such things is an agitator disturbing the minds of the masses. And the masses must at all costs be driven back to the unquestioning acceptance of lives of unrelieved drudgery—to that slumber out of which the thunder of the great machines awoke the peoples of the world.

## CHAPTER III

### TWELVE YEARS OF DOUBT

WHAT THEN has happened to the world? How can it be that such a thing as Fascism has come into existence? How can it be that, even before Fascism arose, frustration and disillusionment were everywhere gaining upon hope and aspiration? How can it be that in twelve short years the outlook of the British people has changed from passionate expectation to bewilderment and apprehension? How can these immense misfortunes have come upon us? Is it not clear that the two processes are in reality one: that the decay of our hope and belief in progress, and the rise of Fascism are but two sides of the same medal?

The purpose of this book is to find the cause and the remedy for this double and disastrous reversal in human destiny. In this chapter, we must look somewhat more closely into the practical and political consequences of the twelve years of frustration, failure and economic contraction which the peoples of the Western Democracies have just experienced.



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For a change of economic conditions so grave that it has changed the fundamental outlook of a whole people has inevitably made immense changes also in the position and prospects of the political parties through the agency of which these peoples express their interests and aspirations. Above all, we must examine the recent history of the main progressive parties, for these parties have been the repositories and embodiments of men's faith in progress. If, then, we can discover what it is that has undone them, we shall be on the way to having discovered how their antithesis, Fascism, can have come upon the world.

In Great Britain, as we have seen, the Labour party has been ever since the war the main progressive party. It has been the instrument by means of which the British people hoped and expected to realize great improvements in their conditions of life.

Up till about the year 1923, the British Labour movement had been, since its foundation, on the offensive. For over twenty years it had striven to realize for the British workers, by means of social services, pensions, insurances, protected wages and hours, extended educational opportunities and the like, the benefits which modern machinery had made possible. It intended, and so far as the great

majority of its supporters were concerned, sincerely intended, to reconstruct the economic system, if such a reconstruction proved necessary, in order to obtain these benefits. Labour was a bold, insurgent force with the faith, the spirit and the vitality of youth. Concessions were being won, wages raised, hours shortened, political growth achieved, industrial organization consolidated.

And then, it is difficult exactly to date the moment, but somewhere about twelve years ago, a change began to set in. It was not that the growth of the movement was halted. The General Election of 1923 registered important gains for the Labour party. It resulted in the summoning to office of the first Labour Government. This Government was led by men who had promised to their working-class supporters a great acceleration of the already well-established movement to increase the workers' share in what seemed to be a rapidly expanding national income. Nor need we doubt but that the Labour leaders would have liked to carry out this promise. They fully intended to obtain benefits, economic, educational and cultural, for the mass of the British people when for the first time they found themselves with the machine of government in their hands. It was so obviously and clearly to the advantage

of their party and themselves to do so, that the question of a conflict between their duty to their supporters and their own inclinations can hardly have arisen.

Moreover, their economic and political philosophy was based on the view that such benefit could be obtained at nobody's expense. They took, and take, the view that the interests of the workers and the capitalists, although no doubt superficially contradictory, are at bottom identical. Anything, they taught, which increased "the purchasing power of the people" would in the end enrich the capitalists also. Hence, they anticipated no decisive resistance to their policy from the rich.

And yet the first Labour Government in Britain failed to accomplish any very tangible results for the British masses. There were, however, many mitigating circumstances. First and foremost, of course, the Labour Government had not possessed an independent parliamentary majority.

It is true that this reason for the inability of the 1924 Labour Government to do anything tangible for the benefit of its supporters will not bear examination. The Liberal party, which formed the necessary support of the Labour Government in the House of Commons, was anxious to press on

with the extension of that system of social services which it had initiated. There was, after the General Election of 1923, a House of Commons majority for a new period of social progress, comparable to the period from 1908 to 1914. Yet somehow the times seemed less propitious. Nor was it difficult to see why they were less propitious. The economic situation had unaccountably, and in spite of an immense growth of productive power, deteriorated. Although new insurances, pensions, restrictions of hours and the like, were quite possible from the party whips point of view, it did not seem economically possible to enact them.

The experience of 1924, was, however, by no means conclusive. The spirit of the British Labour movement was never, it is true, quite the same again. Some element of bouyancy, of self-confidence, of youth and vigour had gone from it. The comparative electoral failure of 1924 was, however, clearly only an incident, and the growth of the Labour party was resumed. And it was resumed, under precisely the same leadership, acting upon precisely the same political philosophy. The British workers were again asked to elect a Labour Government which should, by an extension of social services and by a gradual reconstruction of the economic system, as and when such

reconstruction might be required, bring them their long-promised reward. Again the British people responded, and in 1929 a second Labour Government, in a very much stronger political position than the first, was elected.

In the meanwhile, however, the world had not stood still. The economic situation, although it had not entered upon the period of disastrous deterioration which began immediately afterwards, had not improved. In order to preserve what proved in the event to be a most unstable balance of comparative economic stability, it had been necessary to attack the standards of life of the main mass of British workers. In particular, the statutory restriction of miners' hours to seven, had been abolished, and their wages reduced.

This had given the signal for the mass industrial conflict of the General Strike of 1926. During that conflict, the leaders of the British Labour movement saw revealed a prospect which they were not prepared to face. The strike was called off. It led, however, to the first measure of restriction which had been successfully applied to the British Trade Union movement during the present century. Henceforward, various categories of strike action—notably the sympathetic strike—were made illegal, while the alteration of the terms under

which the "political levy" might be collected, hampered the raising of funds for the Labour party. When in 1929, therefore, the second Labour Government came into office, it found itself with a new task. It was expected, and it had promised, to bring new benefits to the masses : but above all it was expected to drive back the attacks on the workers' rights and standards which had been launched during the preceding four years. The second Labour Government's first task was a defensive one.

This history of that most unhappy of administrations, the second British Labour Government, does not bear retelling. It is a notable fact, however, that in the two cases we have named, in the case of the restriction of miners' hours and of the repeal of the Trade Union Act, it was unable to accomplish its purpose. Far less was it able to carry out that lengthy list of improvements in working-class conditions which were contained in its programme.

The Government had not been in office for six months before a new and sharp turn for the worse took place in the economic situation. There was evidently no longer any question of obtaining new benefits for the workers without damaging the interests of the capitalists. The very idea of such a possibility was clearly

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dependent on a rising national income. And here was the national income beginning to fall. To their dismay, the Labour Ministers discovered that the real task of anyone who chose to administer the Government for British Capitalism was to apportion the sacrifices which the crisis was making necessary. There were no prizes to distribute, only penalties to impose. And somehow or other it seemed inevitable that, under the existing economic system, by far the heaviest penalties should fall on the workers. The Labour Government was soon facing the dilemma of actually taking benefits away from the workers or precipitating an incalculable economic crisis. Before this decision, the Cabinet hesitated. But at each critical point, until the last, it decided to avoid a crisis by imposing sacrifices upon the workers. As early as the autumn of 1929, the wages of the cotton operatives had been reduced by arbitrators appointed by the Labour Government. By the summer of 1931, existing social services were being curtailed by the "Anomalies" Bill. All these cuts proved insufficient, however, and in August 1931 the Cabinet broke asunder upon the question of carrying through much more sweeping measures of "economy."

Once again it would be a mistake to suppose

that the Labour leaders, either those who, in 1931, left their party, or those who remained in it, desired to attack the standard of life of the workers. Unquestionably, it would have been pleasanter and more politically profitable for them to have extended social services, raised wages and shortened hours. Why then did they not do so? They did not do so because they discovered that they could not do so without upsetting the stability of British Capitalism. And this they were not willing to do.

The results for the British Labour movement of the failure of the second Labour Government were much more serious. The electoral loss was much greater. The loss of self-confidence, of unity of purpose, of fighting determination was, however, even worse than the loss of parliamentary seats. Indeed, it is not too much to say that since 1931, the British Labour movement has passed unconsciously from the offensive to the defensive. This is demonstrably and vividly true of the Trade Union movement, which has confined itself wholly to fighting, and fighting with obvious reluctance, a series of rearguard actions against attacks on the workers' standards. But it is becoming clear that it is also true of the Labour party. In March 1933, the Labour party and the T.U.C. issued a manifesto, entitled "Democracy versus



Dictatorship," in which the defence of democratic institutions was announced as the principal task of British labour. This was the first explicit and official statement of something which has been for some time apparent to observers of the party. The Labour party's mission has changed. It no longer demands, with any real conviction, new concessions for the workers. It rather calls on them to defend something—Democracy—already gained and indeed long thought secure. Something has evidently happened which makes the real question at issue not the gaining of any fresh ground, but an attempt to retain some part of what has been already won. A whole movement has been brought to a halt. By what means? <sup>1</sup>

We have instanced the recent history of the British Labour party because that story is already in the minds of British readers. But a far more vivid example of the same process could be drawn from the post-war history of the German Social Democratic party. In 1918, German Social Democracy was all powerful.

<sup>1</sup> Naturally we are not suggesting that the British Labour party has been brought to a halt in an electoral sense. On the contrary, the next General Election in Britain, on the assumption that such an election takes place, will undoubtedly see a great increase in the number of Labour Members of Parliament. Indeed, it may quite possibly yield a Labour majority. But that will not, if the economic situation is still adverse, as it will be, help the Labour party to execute a single one of its proposals of social betterment.

To-day, it has been dissolved without resistance. Nor will it be difficult in future chapters to trace the intermediate steps between the two positions, to distinguish the period of Social Democratic rule, unshared by any other party, the period of coalition Governments with parties of the Centre, the period of the support of Governments formed by parties of the Centre, the period of more or less influential opposition to Governments formed by parties of the Centre and Right, down to the present period of prostration before the Fascist Government of Hitler. Fundamentally, the same process with merely local variations has happened or is visibly happening to the French, the Belgian, the Swedish, the Dutch and all the other Labour or Social Democratic parties. The "official" parties of the Left are everywhere routed, in retreat, or at best have been brought to a halt.

It would almost seem as if there had been something mysterious in the very air of the last twelve years which has mocked the confident hopes of progressive men and women. For this malign influence has affected not only the progressive political parties ; it is a platitude that the very ideals of liberty, democracy, progress, tolerance and international peace, are everywhere assailed, and have everywhere

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begun to loose their hold on men's minds. How could it be otherwise? These ideals cannot remain suspended in mid air. They, must droop if the political parties which embody them falter. There is, there must needs be, after the lamentable history of the last twelve years, a deadly air of staleness, of disappointment, of frustration, about both the parties and the ideals of progress and democracy.

We are confronted by a paradox. While the basis for the belief in human progress, namely, the ever-increasing power to produce and distribute the benefits fo civilization, has gone on expanding at an ever-increasing rate, the progressive, democratic or Labour parties and movements, built on that basis, have everywhere been brought to a halt and are in many places in retreat and decay. Moreover, the very conception of progress is assailed in men's minds.

Thus the opportunity for Fascism has arisen. For if the progressive and democratic movements have of themselves faltered, halted, retreated, surely that shows that there is some deep flaw, some inner contradiction, in the confident doctrine of uninterrupted progress which they have preached? Fascism is correct in this, at any rate—that it has seen that the possibilities of these movements in their present

forms are exhausted. Here then, is the opportunity for reaction. For if the progressive movements have halted, then their retreat must follow. There is no standing still.

But how has it all happened ? The basis, we repeat, for the possibility of progress and betterment, man's knowledge and command over nature, has grown, and still grows, faster than ever. How can it be that the democratic and progressive movements, which were the children of the earlier stages of that very growth are now in decay ? How is it that these movements and parties find themselves beset and threatened on every side ? Why is it that utterly unforeseen difficulties have arisen to frustrate and ruin all their hopes of steady betterment for the masses of the population ? The ship of human progress is dragging at some anchor of disillusionment and frustration. And already her crew are faced with the explicit and deadly challenge of Fascism. How can these things be ?

In order to find the answer to this question let us examine the nature of this extraordinary new force, the force of Fascism, which is growing up out of the decay of the progressive movements.

We shall describe first its most salient characteristic, its dedication to the ideal of war.

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Second, we shall examine the claims of the Fascists to be able to deal with the economic crisis. Third, we shall define the real purpose of Fascism. We shall expose the nature, aims and objects of Fascism when stripped of its pretensions. Then we shall be in a position to show the common cause of the decay of the great hope, of the decay of the progressive parties and ideals which were founded upon that hope, and of the rise of Fascism.

## CHAPTER IV

### FASCISM MEANS WAR

THE FIRST characteristic to catch the eye of the observer of Fascism is beyond doubt its extreme nationalism. Both Fascist movements struggling for power and Fascist Governments when in power exhibit an aggressive nationalism hitherto unparalleled in the history of the world.

Nazi speeches make those of the ex-Kaiser seem essays in Liberal pacifism.<sup>1</sup> Mussolini has sought to build up a spirit of Italian Imperialism, by methods of propaganda, education and the suppression of all contrary opinion, a hundred times as systematic as any that have ever been used before.

The terroristic methods of Fascist Governments are above all launched against those types and categories of persons who are

<sup>1</sup> Goering, it is true, in his speech at the opening of the Nazi Reichstag, contented himself with appealing for a return to "the spirit of Potsdam." But many Nazis, including Goering on other occasions, go much further. Cf. the letter of a Nazi supporter (Franz Wilden) to the *Manchester Guardian* of April 1st, 1933, who remarks: "The mistake of the pre-war regime in Germany was to be too liberal."

considered *anti-national* in character. (Thus *The Times* Berlin correspondent reported that by the end of March 1933 every single, well-known German pacifist was under arrest.) It is, above all, because Jews, Socialists and Communists come into this category that the attempt is made to uproot their influence by every kind of violence from the national life. The comparatively internationalist tendency of the Jewish race (a tendency which many people would consider, as a matter of fact, to be all too weak) is an important cause of the vile anti-Semitism of the German Fascist movement. The Berlin correspondent of the London *Times* deduces from his own first-hand study of the German Fascists that the attempt to uproot pacifism is the basis of the Nazi terror. In *The Times* of April 11th, he writes :

“ It cannot be too often emphasized that the political ‘ cleaning up ’ process has been directed primarily at pacifism. The Nazi objections to the Communists and other persons of Left sympathies lie less in their social and economic theories, with which, indeed, the Socialist side of National-Socialism has much in common, than in their internationalism and anti-war outlook. Although it is clear, from the Nazi Press alone,

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that the anti-Jewish movement is to some extent dictated by professional jealousy, especially in the medical and legal professions, it is admitted by Nazis that the main object was to root out the Jewish 'intellectuals,' who incline to pacifism and internationalism. This object has largely been attained."

(*The Times* correspondent is, of course, entirely mistaken in supposing that Nazi economics have anything in common with Socialism or Communism.)

The Nazis feel that it is necessary to assert that the Jews have been responsible for all the misfortunes of the nation. Unless their influence can be eradicated, they may exemplify some ideal—religious, humanitarian, economic or scientific—other than that of the unlimited worship of the nation-state. For no other loyalty, the Fascists affirm, must be allowed to compete for a moment with the frantic idolatry of patriotism.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Mussolini's well-known dictum, "Beyond the State—nothing," or Professor Gentile's (ex-Minister of Education in Italy and the chief Fascist philosopher) categorical enunciation of this principle. "Both Fascism and nationalism," he writes, "regard the State as the foundation of all rights and the source of all values in the individuals composing it. For the one as for the other the State is not a consequence; it is a principle." Professor Gentile also describes the Fascist State as "a wholly spiritual creation"—like the inquisition, no doubt.



It may be useful to quote here a few typical examples of that German Fascist propaganda which led up to the hideous attempt to extirpate everything Jewish in Germany.

“When Jewish blood spurts from under the knife, then all goes twice as well.”—Nazi song.

*So stand the storm battalions  
Ready for racial fight ;  
Only when Jews lie bleeding  
Can we be really free.*

—Nazi song.

“The Jew is the cause and beneficiary of our national slavery. He ruined our race, rotted out morals, hollowed out our way of life and broke our strength.”—Nazi proclamation.

“The Third Empire will treat Jews like plant lice.”—Nazi Deputy Bauer of the Prussian Diet.

“The Jew is the born ravisher of races. Criminal outcasts from the most desperate peoples once came together in the desert under the leadership of the Lawgiver Moses, and formed the Jewish people. Thus, out of the thousands of years of in-breeding, there

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developed the mongrel race of curs which we see before us in the contemporary Jew. This Jew is forced by his blood to ruin and to decompose all other races. He is driven by his blood and by his inborn abnormal sensuality to ravish non-Jewish women and girls."—*Der Stürmer*, October 1931.

"The Jew is the tape-worm in the human organism, and it is our duty to exterminate him."—Count Ernzt zu Zeventlow, Nazi theorist.

"The natural hostility of the peasant towards the Jews must be whipped up to a frenzy."—Party instructions for National Socialist Leaders, March 15th, 1931.

(These Fascist pronouncements were collected by Mr. Mowrer for his book, *Germany Puts the Clock Back*.)

Finally we may instance Herr Hitler's well-known outburst in his book, *My Struggle* :

"The black-haired Jewish youth lies for hours in ambush, a Satanic joy in his face, for the unsuspecting girl whom he pollutes with his blood and steals from her own race. By every means he seeks to wreck the racial bases of the nation he intends to subdue.

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Just as individually he deliberately befouls women and girls, so he never shrinks from wrecking the barriers race has erected against foreign elements. It was, and is, the Jew who brought negroes to the Rhine, brought them with the same aim and with deliberate intent to destroy the white race he hates by persistent bastardization, to hurl it from the cultural and political heights it has attained, and to ascend them as its masters. . . . He deliberately seeks to lower the race-level by steady corruption of the individual."

The extirpation of the Jews is, as we have seen, only an incidental part of the Fascist programme. The main purpose is to eradicate for ever the dawning hope of international peace from the minds of all men, whether Jew or Gentile. Endless examples of the propaganda in favour of war which lead up to this attempt could be given. But since the matter is, surely, not in dispute, the following may suffice :

" An alliance whose aim does not include the intention of war is worthless nonsense."  
—Herr Hitler, *My Struggle*.

" For the living it was a holy duty to fulfil the mission for which Germans had given their lives in the war. If no other way could

be found, they must be ready to redeem with blood a pledge written in blood.”—Goering at Essen, in his first speech as Reich Commissioner of Aviation.

More recently we have been edified by a speech from Hitler’s Vice-Chancellor, Herr von Papen :

“ They must try to make the world understand why Germany on January 30th, 1933, had struck out the word pacifism from its vocabulary.”

The world understands perfectly well why a Government strikes out the word pacifism from its vocabulary. It does so for exactly the same reason that it builds tanks, bombers and battle-ships. It does so as an essential measure of preparation for a war in which it intends to recover lost wealth and power. But what some people may find a little more difficult to understand are the philosophical views which Herr von Papen went on to express.

“ A philosopher had said that he was no man who was not a father ; it was even more true that she was not a woman who was not a mother. The maintenance of eternal life demanded the sacrifice of the individual.

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Mothers must exhaust themselves in order to give life to children. Fathers must fight on the battlefield in order to secure the future for their sons.”—*The Times*, May 15th.

We forbear to comment on this passage.<sup>1</sup>

The almost incredible jingoism of the

<sup>1</sup> Herr von Papen, when he recommended women “to exhaust themselves” in childbearing in order that the battlefields should not lack their raw material, was only echoing the general Fascist view of women. The profoundly reactionary nature of Fascism is by nothing better exemplified than by its desire to thrust women back into the servitude out of which they are beginning to climb. This subject deserves detailed study. The following quotations will, however, suffice to show what women may expect under a Fascist regime :

“Woman—her place is in the home, her duty the recreation of the tired warrior.”—Goering (Captain Goering might at any rate make his acknowledgements when he misquotes the more hackneyed passages from Nietzsche).

“The woman’s task is to be beautiful and to bring children into the world. . . . The female bird decorates herself for the male and hatches the eggs for him. In return, the male looks after the food, or else he stands on guard and scares the enemy away.”—Goebbels, Minister of “National Enlightenment and Propaganda.”

“In the education of women emphasis must be laid primarily on physical development. Only afterwards must consideration be given to spiritual values, and lastly to mental development. Motherhood is undeniably the aim of feminine education.”—Hitler.

“Hitler does not need us women now, for the fight in which he stands demands spirit, courage and character. But women are not capable of the fight. We are only in the way.”—Maria Diers, a Nazi authoress,

“There is no higher or finer privilege for a woman than that of sending her children to war.”—Declaration of the Women’s Order of the Red Swastika.

For further information on this subject, see *The Nazi Revolution*, published by the Union of Democratic Control.

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German Fascists has tended to make the Italian Fascists seem almost pacific by comparison. But this is an illusion. The whole Italian Fascist movement has been a sustained attempt to put Italy upon a war footing. As Mario Carli, an eminent Fascist, puts it : " Fascism issued from the war and in war it must find its outlet. Our country can conclude nothing except by a great war." The necessity and inevitability of war is the one consistent threat running through the whole of the writings and speeches of Mussolini. It may be worth while to give some of these in chronological order. In one of Mussolini's very first articles in his paper, the *Popolo d'Italia*, immediately after its foundation in 1914, there occurs this passage :

" Three cheers for the war ! May I be permitted to raise this cry ? Three cheers for Italy's war, noble and beautiful above all, with its five thousand dead who are our surest wealth. And three cheers also for war in general ! "

It must be readily admitted that Mussolini has stuck to this opinion with perfect consistency. Immediately after the war, we find him writing :

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“Imperialism is the eternal and immutable law of life.”—*Populo d'Italia*, January 1919.

“Peace is hence absurd, or rather it is a pause in war.”—*Populo d'Italia*, February 1st, 1921.

“I consider the Italian nation to be in a permanent state of war. I have already said, and I repeat, that the next five or ten years are decisive for the destiny of our people.”—Speech to Chamber of Deputies, defending the decision in favour of compulsory arbitration for all Labour disputes, 1926.

“We must be ready at a moment's notice to mobilize five million men and be able to arm them : we must strengthen our navy and also our aviation, in which I believe more and more, and which must be so numerous and so powerful that the roar of its motors can drown every other noise on the peninsula, and the surface of its wings hide the sun from our land.”—Speech, May 26th, 1927.

Fascism's leading principle is that the inevitability and necessity of war must be hammered into men's minds, and the actual

outbreak of war must be ceaselessly and tirelessly prepared for. It would, however, be an error to suppose that a Fascist State would be so *démodé* as actually to declare war. On the contrary, "a coming war for space and employment" would, writes another Nazi theorist, Herr Schwarz van Berk, have the character of an insurrection. "Its preparation must be invisible, and it must be started without formalities."

We cannot question the truth of that Fascist logic which teaches the absolute inevitability of war, if once we admit the Fascist premise of the ultimate and sacred character of each nation-state. It is, truly, quite inconceivable that international peace can be preserved for more than a short period if international organization is a crime, if any loyalty—to class, creed or ideal—is a betrayal of that unqualified loyalty which, the Fascists preach, is due to the State. Yet this is an essential doctrine of Fascism. For example, Franz Schanwecher, another Nazi theorist, writes: "The nation enjoys a direct and very deep unity with God. . . . There is Germany in the Flemish soul, Germany in the novels of Cervantes, Germany in the dramas of Shakespeare. Germany is the centre of the world, and the world cannot exist without Germany. Germany is the



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Kingdom of God." We may compare this view of Germany with the remarks of an Italian Fascist, Ardengo Soffici, about Italy : -

"The greatest humiliation, after that of having witnessed the vogue of German ware amongst us, now happily ended, is that of seeing Europe to-day at the mercy of the Anglo-Saxon race. To see us, the ancient lords of all times, Italy and France (especially Italy) eternal emanators of the sunlight of civilization, creators of ideas, forms and civil customs—of all that is great and glorious in the world—hanging on the lips of big nobodies and of savages hardly civilized. . . ."

It would be wearisome to multiply such quotations. Moreover, we shall be told that all this is mere propaganda, necessary for the success of Fascism, necessary for the fulfilment of the Fascist mission, which is often defined as "the restoration of internal order" ; but really quite harmless and incapable of disturbing the peace of the world. What this view, if it were expressed more frankly, amounts to is that the Fascist exaltation of war is intended merely to distract the attention of the working class from any wrongs which it may suppose itself to

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suffer, but must not for a moment be taken seriously by educated people. We are asked, in a word, to believe that Fascist leaders, when they talk of war, always have their tongues in their cheeks. Their propaganda statements must not, we are assured by the smiling diplomats of Fascism, be thought to have any practical effect on Fascist foreign policy. After all, has not Mussolini kept the peace for nearly ten years now, despite all his violent threats to his neighbours?

The first difficulty which we must all feel in accepting such reassurances is the recollection that exactly the same apologies were made for the much less bellicose utterances of the statesmen of pre-war Capitalist Europe, and that they did not prevent the war from coming. We need not doubt at all the word of the Fascist apologists when they tell us that the hyper-nationalism which they have evoked is primarily intended for the more gullible of their own compatriots. It is perfectly true that the real meaning and mission of Fascism is concerned, as we shall submit below, with internal politics. *But Fascism has chosen an internal policy which inevitably involves war, whether the Fascists like it or not, as its external consequence.*

For the keeping of the peace between Capitalist or Imperialist States, even of the

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liberal, democratic type, has not proved easy. Indeed, it has proved impossible. What, therefore, are we to say about the possibility of keeping the peace in a world of Fascist States, each organized on the basis of rampant militarism, of the laudation of war, of the criminality of any trace of internationalism or pacifism? It is quite true that peace would be "absurd" in a world which inculcates the duty of unqualified, unquestioning worship of the State as the final unlimited authority over every sphere of life, which erects the principle of "my country right or wrong" into a world religion.

And yet it is clear that the frenzied nationalism of the Fascists is an indispensable part of their whole creed. This will emerge more and more clearly as we come to consider the internal and economic policy of Fascism. Fascist economic policy is in fact wholly dependent upon the waging of a successful war. Goering, the Second-in-Command of German Fascism, made this clear in a speech to Nazi workers' organizations in Berlin on April 9th, 1933. "He assured," reports *The Times* Berlin correspondent, "those representatives of the working class, for whom patriotism is not likely to be enough, that the National Socialists would not jettison 'Socialism'

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home. Only, then, what about the British and the French Empires?

A new German (or Italian) Empire can only arise from the defeat and partition of the British, French or some other Empire—or from the defeat and partition of the U.S.S.R. In other words, it can only arise from war—from what Goering calls, so nicely, “service on the outer periphery of the Reich.” The Fascists are perfectly correct in telling their supporters that Fascism can only bring them benefits by means of war. For if Canning could call in a new world to redress the balance of the old, Hitler is not so fortunate.

These are the reasons why it is not possible to accept the Fascist leaders’ assurances that they do not mean what they say. Moreover, they said just the same thing about their anti-Jewish propaganda. All their appeals to kill the Jews were, we were confidentially assured, mere bait to lure the workers away from Socialism. But has that saved the Jews? Even if the Fascist leaders themselves had wished to prevent the pogroms of recent months—and there is no reason to suppose that they did—<sup>1</sup> they could

<sup>1</sup> Another extremely interesting subject for study is the psychological basis of Fascist terrorism. There exists a good deal of evidence that while the Fascist terror as a whole has the perfectly definite object of destroying all the forces of progress, it is carried out by men who delight in torture for its own sake.

A well-known London psychiatrist and psychologist, writing in

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not have done so. You cannot infect millions of men with a passionate hatred and bloodlust

the *Daily Herald* of May 24th, 1933, makes the following comments on the characters and records of some of the Fascist leaders :

“GOERING—more powerful perhaps than even Hitler. A record of his actions and pronouncements—taken even from the official Hitlerite organs—reveals without any vestige of a doubt that he is a paranoiac of the most dangerous type ; with the savage ferocity, directed against Jew, Frenchman, Russian, non-German, non-Hitlerite, indeed against everybody, with the instability, the passionate impulsiveness, and the sadistic violent hate of the paranoiac.

“Hate is the most characteristic symptom of paranoia—hatred of imaginary persecutors. Goering evidently found the Hate that he was not able to indulge so oppressive that he resorted—as do a certain percentage of paranoiacs—to drugs that might allay the violent and passionate emotions resulting from his delusions.

“It is known that as far back as 1925 he was detained—after trouble with the Swedish police—at an asylum in Stockholm as a dangerously violent lunatic and drug-addict. Even at that time he entertained the delusions of being persecuted by imaginary enemies that is so characteristic of paranoia.

“There is no doubt that if he were deprived of his morphine for one single week, he would be reduced to a pitiable state of slobbering demented insanity.

“Yet this man has probably greater executive power than anyone in Germany to-day. No wonder atrocities are common and constructive activities rare.”

(The Stockholm correspondent of the *Daily Herald* reports that the files of the Stockholm Communal Asylum show that Captain Wilhelm Herman von Goering was admitted on September 1st, 1925, and discharged on November 19th, 1925.)

“ROSENBERG—theorist of the movement and exponent of Anti-Semitism—also showed in his works the lack of balance and judgment and the sadistic ferocity of the paranoiac. In one of his ‘classic’ works he demands that ‘on each telegraph pole from Munich to Berlin, the head of a prominent Jew must be displayed.’ The most righteous indignation of normal people against even the most depraved criminals would never express itself in such a manner.

“ROEHM—one of Hitler’s righthand men—is a self-confessed homo-sexual who figured in a scandal that shocked Germany some years ago. Although he has abused his military power to satisfy his perverse desires, he is still Military Leader of the Nazis and Minister in Bavaria.”

and then suddenly restrain them from action when you come to power. Precisely the same process is certain to operate in the case of Fascist war propaganda.

There remains the argument that the Fascists have been in power in Italy for ten years without going to war. Now, to keep the peace, albeit with ever-increasing difficulty and with constantly growing hostility, with all your neighbours for ten years is not in itself a very startling achievement. No one is suggesting that the Fascists' intention is to make war, for its own sake, on anybody and everybody the moment that they come to power. Our contention is rather that the intrinsic character of Fascism, its whole appeal, its economic programme, its method of dealing with its internal difficulties, are of such a kind as to make war, sooner or later, inevitable. The fact that Mussolini has, with great difficulty, gained for Italy a period of peace, which he has used to the full for intensifying Italian war preparations of every kind, is, no doubt, a tribute to his prudence. But it does not even affect the question of the inevitability of war under Fascism.

Moreover, several extremely favourable elements in the situation of Italian Fascism, which are not present in Germany, have made

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it possible for Mussolini to "hold" his internal situation until a more favourable moment for an Imperialist adventure arises. First, Italy was a victorious, not a defeated, nation in the last war. She gained a very considerable amount of territory and she received most helpful annual reparations payments. This has made it possible for Italian Imperialist Capitalism to expand to a considerable extent without the need for further conquest. Mussolini's "narrow but adorable peninsula" had, after all, been supplemented already by a nice slice of the Trentino. Compare this position with that of German Fascism, which inherits a country which has lost important territories and has had to pay a large reparations tribute. Second—and this is the most important factor—Italy is a predominantly peasant country, with a comparatively under-developed Capitalist industry which does not imperatively require, if it is to give employment to its workers, ever new markets, raw materials and territories to exploit, to anything like the extent to which, for example, the giant industries of Germany require them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hitler's "peace speech" to the specially summoned meeting of the Reichstag in May 1933, in fact, reveals not the pacific intentions of the German Fascists, but the desperate dilemma which confronts them. On the one hand, their internal situation imperatively requires to be sustained by the fruits of victory: on the other hand, Germany is still quite insufficiently armed to make victory in war a

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In addition to these factors, we must remember that Italy is an inherently weak nation. A war in the international situation of the last ten years, when Europe was completely dominated by France, would have been sheer suicide for the Italian Fascists. Mussolini has worked tirelessly, however, to change that situation and to create such allies for himself in Europe as could give him a chance of successfully challenging the French hegemony. He appears to be on the point of succeeding in doing this, and the hand of the diplomacy of Fascist Italy can be found in every critical situation in Europe to-day. It will very soon become apparent that it was only the weakness of Italy, combined with her inability to find adequate allies, and not any possibility of combining Fascism with peace, which has kept a precarious peace in Europe during the last ten years.

It would be wholly unrealistic, however, to envisage the situation as that of a stable and peaceful world into which the Fascists erupt. The truth is that, even without the new and

possibility. Hence, the necessity to Hitler of gaining time for re-armament. But at the same time his lieutenants (von Papen, on this occasion) are told off to inform the Nazis at home, in a rather audible aside, that war is the ultimate purpose all right and that "the leader" is only manœuvring. (We have already quoted from von Papen's ultra-bellucose speech, delivered just before Hitler's speech to the re-assembled Reichstag.)



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open provocations of Fascism, the Capitalist "democracies" were, and are, headed directly towards war on their own account. War is being prepared even in those countries in which internationalism and pacifism are still tolerated, even in countries such as England and France, in which there exist unbroken working-class movements capable of acting as powerful brakes on their respective Governments. Everywhere, indeed, the coming of a new war is more and more apparent. Disarmament has proved impossible. The League of Nations is more and more discredited. War—started, it is true, as Herr Schwarz van Berk puts it, "without formalities"—has already begun in the East.

This situation has arisen from the innate characteristics of present-day Capitalist Imperialism: it has arisen while most of the major Empires were still governed by the ordinary Capitalist democratic methods. Thus the Fascists enter a world scene which is already extremely disturbed. In general, we may say of them that while it would be greatly to overrate their capacities to say that they have built the powder magazine (that is the work of Capitalist Imperialism itself), yet one cannot deny that they provide most efficient matches. For the drive towards war is becoming far

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more rapid as the Capitalist Empires are one by one handed over to the Fascists, who openly proclaim a policy of aggression, violence and unqualified Imperialism. Fascism is Imperialism raised to a pitch of frenzy hitherto unknown.

This fact can hardly be denied. But why, we must enquire, should this be so? What is there about the Fascist creed, Fascist aims and Fascist methods, which requires this extremity of nationalistic passion? We have already begun to suggest an answer on the basis of Goering's little homily on the respective rôles of nationalism and "Socialism" in the Fascist system. We cannot, however, find a full answer to this question until we have looked somewhat more closely into the nature of Fascism, and more particularly into the nature of the Fascist economic programme.

Perhaps, however, the reader will agree that, whatever the reason may be, Fascism as we know it in Europe to-day undeniably, inevitably and admittedly means war.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CORPORATE STATE

IT MUST not be supposed that Fascism gains its hold over men's minds by the naked promise of war. On the contrary, Fascism promises to every man his heart's desire. To a tired, bewildered, frightened world, Fascism promises that it will bring security and stability. To peoples weary of strife, suspicious of their democratic leaders, to the disillusioned and the doubting, Fascism promises decision and action. Fascism tells the worker that it will give him employment ; it tells the shopkeeper that it will give him customers ; it tells the peasant that it will give him land ; it tells the capitalist that it will give him dividends. In short, Fascism promises to make the economic and social system work again. All that is needed, say the Fascists, to cure our present troubles is a Government of strong, determined, ruthless men, who will restore order, create confidence and suppress the agitators.

Fascist promises are immensely attractive. If only it can get the world to believe in them,

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its success is assured. Each Fascist party does, it is true, slip into its list of promises the proviso that they cannot be fulfilled without an immense increase in the territory and world power of the particular Fascist State in question. And each Fascist Government admits, with varying degrees of frankness, that this is not possible without war. "A war for space and employment," is the necessary preliminary to entering the Fascist paradise. (Goering and Mussolini, we have seen, are explicit on this point. "The condition for the solution of the social problem at home is to build up the outward strength which will then create the room for the existence of the individual and of the nation as a whole," says Goering. "We are forty million squeezed into our narrow but adorable peninsula—Italian expansion is a problem of life and death," says Mussolini.)

This admission that a new world war is the condition for a Fascist solution of our problems will in itself be enough to damn Fascism for ever in the eyes of every sane man and woman. But in countries like Britain which have huge Empires already this fatal condition is naturally kept in the background of Fascist propaganda.

Indeed, Fascism in Britain can hardly promise to cure all our troubles by acquiring

an Empire. For Britain has a gigantic Empire already. This circumstance will compel the British Fascists to assume a less violently aggressive tone than their German or Italian colleagues. They will speak of "defending our glorious Empire," not of conquering a new one. Is it not clear, however, that the determination of States, which already exploit almost half the world as their private preserve, to cling on to their Empires at all costs is just as fatal to the peace of the world as the determination of the defeated States to conquer new Empires? It is so easy for Britain to say that she does not want to take anything from anybody. The millionaire is perfectly sincere when he tells us that he feels not the slightest temptation to rob the burglar. But the starving burglar must rob the millionaire, and who is to say which factor has broken the peace—the millionaire's resolve to hold on to his money or the burglar's determination to take it? Thus, the Imperialism of the British Fascists, though apparently far more moderate, will lead to war just as directly as the Imperialism of Hitler and Mussolini.

Just because the British Fascists have not so much scope for whipping up their supporters against the foreign foe, they will be compelled to say more about their economic programme.

Already they offer us a whole stock-in-trade of solutions of the economic problem. In particular, they give an impressive name to the institution which will, they say, bring us all the benefits that Socialism promises without any of the disturbance to our existing habits which Socialism suggests. For Fascism claims to possess an entirely new economic principle. It claims to be neither Capitalism nor Socialism—but a third thing, Fascism. For example, Major Barnes, late Secretary-General of the International Centre of Fascist Studies, writes in his standard volume, entitled *Fascism*: “Fascism is radically opposed to the drift of phenomena which characterizes the modern economic system; but is far from being opposed to the retention of capital in private hands. It is accordingly opposed to both Capitalism and Socialism.”

In order to substantiate this claim, the Fascists put forward the conception of “the Corporate State.” Now few people in Britain have any clear conception of what the Corporate State may be. We most of us feel vaguely, however, that it has some relation to *planning*—that it is, on the whole, a collectivist as opposed to an individualist conception. Thus there exists a loosely held idea that the Fascist economic programme is in some

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respects akin to Socialism—that it recognizes equally with Socialism that it is the chaos of Capitalist production which is at the root of our disasters. Fascism, it is claimed, is a force which will in some way bring planning, regulation and order into the economic system.

And this is what we all long for. Above everything else we long for a solution, a settlement—almost any solution, any settlement—of the frightful problems that press in upon us. The ship of modern Capitalism reels and rocks as the towering waves of the economic crisis rush down upon it. Nowhere is there stability, confidence. No man is sure of anything, of his job, his bread, his house. He sees neighbour after neighbour engulfed in destitution; he sees flagrant injustice growing and unremedied; he sees the promises of his democratic leaders turned to mockery.

Let us hasten then to the study of the new Fascist proposal for the remedy of all this: let us study the Corporate State. For the Corporate State, says Sir Oswald Mosley, the leader of one section of British Fascism, is “the main object of a modern and Fascist movement . . . in our belief it is the greatest constructive achievement of the mind of man” (*The Greater Britain*, p. 26).

Unfortunately, however, we find considerable

difficulties in our way when we seek to discover the precise nature of "the greatest constructive achievement of the mind of man." There exists in English no book or pamphlet which gives the reader any clear description of the Corporate State. Major Barnes, for example, has a chapter on "The Economic Principles of Fascism." But he is more interested in defining, and this he does very fully, the philosophical principles of Fascism than in describing any existing or projected forms of economic organization. For example, he tells us that "with its eye on the moral law, Fascism then starts by sanctifying the possession of property." He is intent to explain to us how Fascism reconciles private property and morality, rather than to explain how it reconciles private property and a solution of the modern economic problem.

Sir Oswald Mosley, in his book *The Greater Britain*, probably makes the nearest approach which has ever been attempted to outlining the actual forms of organization for the Corporate State. In any case, his version of the matter is, so far as Britain is concerned, an authoritative one, so we had best accept as definitive his chapter entitled "The Corporate State." What does he tell us? Let us take his points one by one. First, (p. 26) he tells us



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that the Corporate State "is essentially adaptable" and that it "envisages, as its name implies, a nation organized as the human body." On p. 27, he tells us what the Corporate State is not. It does not mean, he writes, "control from Whitehall, or constant interference by Government with the business of industry." He goes on, in one important paragraph, to tell us what the Corporate State will do.

"But it does mean that Government, or rather the Corporate system, will lay down the limits within which individuals and interests may operate. Those limits are the welfare of the nation—not, when all is said, a very unreasonable criterion. Within these limits, all activity is encouraged; individual enterprise, and the making of profit, are not only permitted, but encouraged so long as that enterprise enriches rather than damages by its activity the nation as a whole."

This sounds very attractive. We are to have "good" private enterprise, but not "bad" private enterprise. We are to have profit-making, but only when it enriches rather than damages the nation. We are to have all the advantages of Capitalism and none of its

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defects. No one can quarrel with this. However, let us proceed. On p. 28, we find that the Corporate State has a place for both financiers and Trade Union leaders. Only again they must be "good" financiers and "good" Trade Union leaders.

"In our labour organization, there will be no place for the trade union leader who, from sectional or political motives, impedes the development of a vital service. But there will be an honoured place for the financial organization which joins in the work of reconstruction, and for trade unions which co-operate with such reconstruction in the interest of members who are also members of the national community."

Moreover the financiers and Trade Unionists will be brought together. There will be "an equitable distribution of the proceeds of industry." And the financiers and Trade Union leaders are to find that "instead of being the general staff of opposing armies, they will be joint directors of national enterprise under the general guidance of Corporative Government."

Nothing could be better. We await impatiently the explanation which must surely be coming of how the Corporate State is to

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make these virtuous financiers and Trade Unionists, who up till now have found that the hard facts of life compelled them to desire, the one low wages and long hours, the other high wages and short hours, to wake up one morning as "joint directors of national enterprise."

On p. 30, we find that "the first principle [of the Corporate State] is to absorb, and use, the elements which are useful and beneficial." The remaining five pages of the chapter on the Corporate State are occupied by expressions of opinion in regard to some of our existing political institutions.

On p. 31, we find that the supporters of the Corporate State "respect and venerate the Crown," which is "an institution worn smooth by the friction of long ago." On the other hand, the House of Lords is an "unworkable anachronism" and must be abolished. On p. 32, we are told that, under the Corporate State, "the majority of the Members of Parliament will be elected on an occupational, rather than a residential basis."

Now we may or may not agree with these opinions but, try as we will, we shall find it hard to see what they have to do with the problem which the Corporate State has to solve. For the Corporate State is held up to us as the solution of our *economic* difficulties, not

as a new form of political constitution. It is, we are told, the marvellous discovery which will cure unemployment, bring security and plenty for all, and reconcile the interests of Capital and Labour. Moreover, it will do so, without disturbing either the financiers or the Trade Unionists.

Sir Oswald Mosley has given us repeated and eloquent assertions that the Corporate State will do all this. But we defy the reader to discover any indication of *how* it will do it. (We beg the reader, if he suspects that our summary of Sir Oswald Mosley's argument has been an unfair one, to read the full text for himself.) And Sir Oswald Mosley's description of the Corporate State is not only the most authoritative : it is also quite the most explicit and precise. Hence, our search for a comprehensible account of the Corporate State meets with great difficulties. The Fascists seem a little shy of telling us in advance *how* their supreme invention is going to take us out of our troubles.

This, however, may be a much less serious criticism than it sounds. For Fascism has been in power in one considerable European State, in Italy, for ten years past. Let us then turn our attention from mere theoretical accounts of what the Corporate State would be, to an

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actual working model of the Corporate State in being. An ounce of practice is undoubtedly more valuable in these matters than a ton of theory. So we turn hopefully from Fascist literature to a study of actual Fascist achievements. And, sure enough, we find that a series of laws and decrees have in Italy duly and formally established the Corporate State.<sup>1</sup>

How can it any longer be said that the nature of the Corporate State is in doubt? Here is a Corporate State which has been in existence for the last six years in our neighbouring country of Italy. We have only to study the laws and decrees which established it, and to note how they have worked, in order to get a clear idea of this remarkable institution.

Let us begin, therefore, with the law of April 3rd, 1926. It may come to us as something of a surprise, when we read the text of this law, to discover that its only important provision is the imposition of compulsory arbitration for all labour disputes and, following logically on this, the setting up of Labour Tribunals with powers to punish the simultaneous withdrawal of their labour by more

<sup>1</sup> Notably the law of April 3rd, 1926; the decree of July 1st, 1926, which amplified that law; the decree of July 2nd, 1927, which established the Ministry of Corporations; the decree of March 17th, 1927, defining the seven Corporations of the State; and finally the Charter of Labour of April 21st, 1927.

Here, then, we begin to see what a Corporation is. It is a sort of Joint Standing Committee, set up between the Employers Federation and the Trade Union in any given industry. For example, if the Miners Federation of Great Britain and the Mining Association set up such a permanent Joint Committee, it would be a Corporation. Article 44 reveals to us the functions of these joint bodies. They are the obvious ones of seeking to come to agreements on hours and wages (in the somewhat pompous words of the decree : "to conciliate the controversies which may arise between organizations co-ordinated"), to establish labour exchanges, to regulate questions of apprenticeships and, generally, to help things along (in the words of the decree : "to promote, encourage, and sustain all measures intended to co-ordinate production and improve its organizations").

We rub our eyes and wonder, can this really be all? Yes, this is all, or rather it is a great deal more than all. It is a great deal more than all that has ever been achieved towards the actual establishment of the Corporate State.

These modest Joint Committees of employers and employed, which is all that the famous Corporations turn out to be, have of course existed in non-Fascist countries for

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years and years. (The Statutory National Wages Board of the British Railways is certainly a Corporation, for example.) *But they do not exist in Fascist Italy.*

• For what must be our astonishment to discover that, meagre and unimportant as are the functions of the Corporations—*no Corporations exist at all except on paper!* On July 2nd, 1926, it is true, a Ministry of Corporations was duly established, with a Minister, staff and everything proper. On March 17th, a decree was published providing for seven Corporations. It may be well to quote the impartial testimony of Mr. Schneider (*Making the Fascist State*) on the result.

“The work will be done directly by the Minister of Corporations and hence these largely nominal bodies will be not merely ‘organs of the state,’ as the theory demands, but really mere additional powers for present politicians. As a result, *not a single corporation has been formally created.*”

Mr. Schneider was writing in May 1928. But in January 1933, his words remained a substantially accurate description of the situation. The only change was that a Corporation of artists and intellectual workers had been formed.

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This, however, is surely just the sort of exception which proves the rule. Is it not significant that it is in this field, in one of the few fields of human activity that is, in which there scarcely exist employers and employed, that a Corporation has come into existence? For in this field a Corporation, which is a joint organization of employers and employed, has obviously no functions whatever to perform.<sup>1</sup>

It remained only to crown the paper achievements of the Corporate State with a resounding declaration. And this was done in the famous

<sup>1</sup> While the text of this book was being revised for the press, a report was received in London that some industrial Corporations had at length been set up in Italy. The only details at present available are contained in a message from the Milan Correspondent of *The Times*, dated May 18th, 1933.

"A further step towards the construction of the Corporate State has been taken with the creation of the 'category corporations' of industries.

"The creation of the corporations was foreseen by the law of April 3, 1926; *only now have they actually taken form*. . . . Now the category corporations have been set up—one, for example, for the iron and steel industry and others for the silk and cotton industries, etc. They will render the application of the corporative principle more easy and practical.

"Each category corporation will be composed of representatives of masters and men of the particular category, of representatives of the two confederations to which the masters and men are attached, and of representatives of the Fascist Party. Each will be presided over by an Under-Secretary of State. *The function of each will be consultative and conciliatory*. The category corporations will also be able to formulate rules about wages, control of apprentices, social relations, and relations between category and category." (The italics are ours.)

This despatch makes it clear that these "category corporations," if they have in fact come into being, are merely Joint Conciliation Boards between the Fascist Trade Unions and the Employers' Federations.



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Charter of Labour published on April 21st, 1927. This document, which the Italian Fascists inform us supplants the Rights of Man of the French Revolution, and is a genuine instead of a fictitious social contract, consists of thirty clauses, which it would be wearisome to quote *in extenso*. It informs us that the Italian nation is superior to any individual and that Labour is a social duty, and edifies us with many more such generalities. Clause 7, alone, really says something. And this is what it says: "the Corporate State regards private initiative in the field of production as the most effective and useful instrument of the national interest."

*In other words, the Corporate State is Capitalism just as we know it to-day, with all its instability, its crises, its misery and its decay, plus a form of serfdom for the workers imposed by compulsory arbitration and the denial of the worker's right to withdraw his labour. Everything else is a pure bluff!*

Naturally, therefore, this non-existent institution, this paper paradise of the Corporate State, has not done anything to solve the economic problems of Italy. The Italian workers have remained just as poor, insecure, and dogged by unemployment as the workers in other Capitalist countries: the Italian peasants have remained as bowed under their

load of drudgery, by their sixteen hours of daily toil, and by the ignorance, superstition, and darkness, which must inevitably accompany such toil, as have the peasants elsewhere. And for that matter, the Italian lower middle class, has suffered from the same insecurity and accumulating pressure from the Capitalist combines as has the same class in say, Britain, or America.

The League of Nations figures of Italian economic activity for the last ten years show that Italy has suffered exactly the same vicissitudes of fortune as have the other Capitalist countries. Things were bad in Italy, just as they were everywhere else, in 1923 when the Fascists took power. They improved steadily, just as they did everywhere else, until 1929. And from 1929 to the present moment economic conditions in Italy, as elsewhere, have got worse and worse and worse. For example, the average monthly figures of steel production, always a good indication of the economic life of a country, are as follows : 1923, 102,000 tons ; 1929, 188,000 tons ; 1931, 121,000 tons ; 1932 (first seven months), 110,000 tons. The figures for the movement of goods on the railways, expressed in kilometre tons, are as follows : month average for 1924, 872 ; for 1930, 1024 ; for 1931, 893 ; for 1932 (first two months), 721.

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The number of commercial failures per month has been : 1923, 481 ; 1929, 1,010 ; 1931, 1,483 ; 1932 (first seven months), 1,736.

The *International Labour Review* reports that the "real" wages of Italian farm labourers have varied as follows : 1923, 107 ; 1926, 89 ; 1929, 97 ; 1931, 87. The League reports Italian unemployment as 122,000 in 1925 ; 414,000 in 1927 ; 406,000 in 1929 ; 642,000 in 1930 ; 982,000 in 1931. In 1932 it went over the million mark. (Moreover, it must be remembered that these are official figures of registered unemployed only, and that industrial workers represent a small proportion of the Italian population.) The *World Economic Survey* of 1931-32, published by the League of Nations, gives the following figures for industrial wages. The average hourly earnings in the principal Italian industries were 100 for 1929 ; 100 for June 1930 ; 93 for December 1930 ; 90 for June 1931 ; and 86 for December 1931. Since then they have undoubtedly fallen still further.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of the Corporate State upon the stability of Italian economic system has been precisely nil. How could it be anything else, since it has never been brought into existence at all ? Those unfortunate working class, lower middle

<sup>1</sup> For further information on the economic position of Fascist Italy, see Professor Scott Nearing's pamphlet, entitled *Fascism*, published by the Vanguard Press, New York.

class and peasant Italians who, no doubt, supported Fascism in the sincere belief that it would cure their ills, have not got any benefit from it. On the contrary, they have had taken from them the one right which under a Capitalist system gives the workers any element of protection—the right to withdraw their labour. This is the sole element of reality in the Corporate State. Inevitably, therefore, the Italian people have remained as poor, as insecure, as subject to unemployment, as exploited, as fearful of worse disasters to come, as the rest of us.

## CHAPTER VI

### CAN FASCISM PLAN?

THE FASCISTS may tell us that the Corporate State has never come into existence in Italy, and has consequently fulfilled none of the resounding promises, because of some unlucky accident. In Britain, they may say, it would be different. Hence, it is important to show the general reasons why the whole idea of the Corporate State, the whole claim of the Fascists to be able to cure our ills by planning, is sheer deception.

Now the Fascists reiterate that they do not intend to disturb private enterprise, or the private ownership of the means of production. In other words, they do not intend to interfere with the basis of the Capitalist system. Let us consider for a moment what this Capitalist system is.

Its whole foundation is the ownership of the factories, railways, mines, farms, etc., by separate, private individuals (or group of individuals, such as our Joint Stock Companies). Every other feature of the system follows on naturally and inevitably from this.

For these owners of the means of production will, it is presumed, use their factories, farms, etc., if only they are left in the undisturbed possession of them, to produce the food, clothes, housing, etc., which we all need. They will do so because to produce will be the only way in which they can make a profit for themselves—the only way in which they can get any benefit out of their ownership of the means of production. Moreover, it is claimed that they will have to produce just the things—the particular clothes, houses, motor-cars, amusements or what not—which we all want. For, if they do not do so, we shall not buy the things which they produce.

Thus we shall obtain, it is said, by this method of leaving capital—which is only another name for the means of production—in private hands, a vast, complex, but *self-regulating* system of production, distribution and exchange. The incentive of *profits* will drive on the owner to produce, and the indicator of *prices* will tell him what to produce. If we want more boots and fewer motor-cars, more people will go to the boot shops and fewer to the motor sale-rooms ; the price of boots will go up, the price of motors will go down. And so the owners of capital will have to use more of it to produce boots and less of it to produce motor-cars.

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This is how the Capitalist system of production is said to work. And it would be untrue to deny that, in a sense, it has worked. For whose benefit it has worked is another matter which we need not raise here. But, in the past, the actual economic system of the country has borne a recognizable resemblance to this picture of a huge, self-regulating, automatic machine, pulled powerfully forward by the quest for profit and kept in control by the governor of price.

Now surely it is clear that any such system as this cannot possibly have applied to it a policy of planning. *For planning, if it means anything, means the refusal to leave the three vital questions of what is to be produced, who shall produce it, and how much of it shall be produced, to the free play of the forces of profits and prices.* Planning means that some person or persons shall, arbitrarily and in advance, determine these three vital things. Now, is it not obvious that so long as Capitalism exists, so long, that is, as the means of production are left in separate, individual hands, this is both undesirable and impossible? So long as the owners of capital have to live by the profits which they can make out of using their capital for production, they cannot produce anything except those things which the condition of the market—the

price indicator, that is—shows them they can sell at a profit. They cannot produce anything else even if the most dictatorial Government in the world orders them to do so—for, if they do, they will simply go bankrupt.

Hence planning, which is the settling in advance in accordance with some plan, of what shall be produced, instead of leaving this question to the free play of the market, is literally impossible so long as the system of leaving capital in private individual hands exists. If under such a system you do try to plan—to settle production in advance—you will only succeed in utterly disorganizing the regulating mechanism of the market price. You will put the unfortunate capitalist, the owner of the means of production, into an impossible position. You will tell him, for example, to produce a hundred thousand pairs of boots, so as to fulfil your plan, when it is quite clear from the state of the boot market that he will only be able to sell them at a loss. He will either have to disobey you or face bankruptcy.

“But,” it may be objected, “a Fascist Government will never be so silly as to order a capitalist to produce boots unless he can sell them at a profit.”

If the state of the market is such that the



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capitalist can sell boots at a profit, there will be no need to order him to produce them : he will be doing so already as fast as he can. Thus a Fascist Government, or any other Government which leaves the means of production in private hands, faces this dilemma. It looks round to see what is needed by the people under its rule. Nor will it have any difficulty in finding needs. It will find that its people desperately need boots, houses, clothes, all manner of necessities. Why, then, should it not order the capitalist owners of the means of production to produce these things ? The answer is that, if the state of the market is such that the capitalists cannot sell these things at a profit, they will all go bankrupt if they are ordered to produce them. And if the state of the market is such that they *can* sell these things at a profit, they will be producing them already, without the least need for the Government's orders.

Examples could clearly be multiplied to any extent. All that they would prove, however, and that is surely obvious already, is that you cannot have it both ways. If a Government decides to leave capital in private, individual hands and to maintain the prices, profits system, then it must leave the question of what is produced to "the motives of the market."

Such a Government must inevitably find any direct intervention in economic affairs, any positive planning, impossible. You cannot have the advantages of *both* the self-regulating mechanism of individualistic Capitalism and the planned production of Socialism.

For Socialism is the alternative way of organizing production. And its foundation is that capital (the means of production) is not left in private, separate hands, but is pooled under the ownership of the whole community. And just as the profits, prices, "motives of the market" way of adjusting production followed inevitably from the leaving of capital in individual private hands, so the planning in advance of production follows inevitably, as the only available way of regulating production, when once the capital of the country has been pooled under public ownership. For, once that has been done, you have destroyed the whole basis of the market ; you have lost the indicator of prices and the incentive of profits. Therefore, production for use must be organized on the basis of some pre-arranged plan, in accordance with the consciously expressed wishes of the community.

Now the point which we are trying to make in this chapter has nothing to do with the rival merits of these two systems—Capitalism and

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Socialism. All we wish to make clear, is the distinction between them. Capitalism, the private ownership of the means of production, and the profits—prices system of the self-regulation of production, must go together. Socialism, the public ownership of the means of production, and the regulation of production according to a plan, must also go together.

It may have been worth while to rehearse briefly these quite familiar and well-established distinctions in order to realize the absurdity of the claim put forward by the Fascists. For the Fascists claim to be able to combine all the advantages claimed for Capitalism with all the benefits of Socialism, to be able to combine the private ownership of the means of production with a planned system of production.

No wonder that the Corporate State, the unfortunate institution which is supposed to perform this miracle, remains on paper ! The Fascists can pass a hundred laws and ten thousand decrees setting up the Corporate State, but nothing whatever will happen. They might just as well pass a law that it should always be fine on Sundays, and a decree that oil and water should henceforth form a perfect mixture.

. . . . .

Is this, then, really all there is to the Fascist economic programme? No; it is not all. If the Fascists do not and cannot plan, they can and do wreck. This far more real side of the Fascist economic programme has been brought to its culminating point in Germany. First, the German Fascists worked out the most amazing code of economic demagoguery that has ever disgraced the mind of man. They literally promised everything to everybody. It is difficult to find any coherence, any thread of consistency at all, running through the Nazi farrago of nonsense about "creative capital" and "acquisitive capital," the wickedness of the big banks and the even greater wickedness of disturbing private property, the sinister nature of multiple stores and the comparative sanctity of Messrs. Woolworths (see Hitler's promise to the Americans that Woolworths shall not be disturbed), the fantastic talk about "free money" and the promise not to inflate.

All the same, there is a strand of consistency in all this. The main point of Nazi demagoguery in the economic field is directed against *large* concerns. The *large* banks are crushing the *small* independent firms say, or at any rate said, the Nazis. The multiple stores are ruining the good honest German shopkeeper. The great "soulless" trusts are killing competition.

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Their mortgages, controlling shares, holding companies, are strangling the freedom of trade.

This is obviously the economic programme of a ruined lower middle class, dreaming of the possibility of smashing the Woolworths and other multiple stores, which are already driving their shops off the street, and of the hard-pressed owners of small works with huge overdrafts to one of the big banks. Hitler has adroitly combined this propaganda with anti-Semitism. The rival shopkeeper who has beaten you in trade—is it not certain that he had a Jewish grandmother? (All persons, one out of the four of whose grandparents were Jewish, are officially regarded as Jewish in Germany to-day, and are accordingly deprived of most of their rights of citizenship.) The big banker who is just going to foreclose, and his lawyer who has just proved his case against you in court, are not their noses suspect? This has proved splendid stuff for the platform. Every little shopkeeper has been taught to hate the great multiple store round the corner, which is either really owned by Jews, or can be said to be. Here is something obvious, tangible, simple, for the shopkeeper to hate. The big store is able in many cases to undersell the smaller shop. The big trust is threatening to absorb the little

independent firm. How easy to mobilize hatred against them !

Nor does it seem to have disturbed the lower middle class of Germany that it was, almost admittedly, just the biggest bankers and trust owners, both non-Jewish and Jewish, who were financing the Hitler movement. The German shopkeepers were, it seems, quite prepared to believe that these philanthropic gentlemen would finance a movement which was going, when it assumed power, to attack their own interests. The undeception of the German lower middle class has already begun. For, of course, since Hitler has been given power he has done nothing whatever against the interests of his paymasters, the great German trust owners and bankers, whether Jew or Gentile. On the contrary, he has made the biggest and most typical of these, Herr Hugenburg, the Minister in charge of economic affairs. He has tried to distract his followers by the vile Jew torturing of the past months—a torturing, be it noticed, strictly confined to Jews whose bank accounts are under five figures. For the length of a bank account will always atone for the length of a nose.

Nor has Hitler really done anything serious against the interests of the multiple stores. He staged the one-day boycott of alleged Jewish

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stores. But even they are all open again now, and the process of the squeezing out of the small shop-keeper will go on just the same as ever. The whole situation was perfectly summed up in a cartoon in what, not unnaturally, proved to be the last issue of the German comic paper, *The Duck*. It showed a picture of Hitler's first Cabinet meeting. Goering, Hugenburg, Hitler, Papen, and the rest have pushed their seats back from the table and are in fits of laughter—for Hitler has just made a *bon mot*. He has repeated one of his election pledges. "Now," he is saying, "I suppose we nationalize the big banks and trusts, what?"

Naturally this talk of favouring the small producer at the expense of the big producer directly contradicts all the planning, Corporate State, side of Fascist propaganda. It would, if it were ever put into effect, actually destroy just the trusts, holding companies, cartells and the like, which are always held up to us as the germs of planning under Capitalism. Any attempt to carry out a rationalized version of the Nazi economic programme would amount to a movement to go back to the most orthodox, *laisser-faire*, strictly competitive form of Capitalism, such as existed sixty or seventy years ago. (This indeed is the only independent policy which the Fascists have got, and in Italy at the

beginning of the Fascist regime, De Stefani, the Fascist Finance Minister, did actually make some attempt to put it into effect. But even in Italy, and ten years ago, where and when circumstances were much more favourable, it had soon to be abandoned. Since then, Italian Capitalism has drifted steadily towards monopoly—Imperialist forms, unaffected one way or another by Fascism.)

It is, of course, unthinkable that Hitler will seriously attempt any policy which injures the interests of his paymasters, the great German trusts and banks. But in one respect Hitler will, and the Italian Fascists did, put into effect their anti-planning, anti-combination programme. And that is by the Fascist attack upon the workers' forms of combination, upon Trade Unionism and the Co-operative movement. For, clearly, one of the features of a return to *laissez-faire*, highly competitive Capitalism, would be the smashing of all forms of workers combinations, and the driving down of wages to their "natural" level, i.e. the subsistence level. And *this* half of the anti-combination programme the Fascists really do carry out. They ruthlessly repress all forms of working-class organization. They re-introduce, as we have shown, the principle of the hated Combination Acts, which in Britain were repealed



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over a hundred years ago. They make slaves of the industrial workers by taking from them their one bargaining weapon, the right to withdraw their labour. Fascism in a word, restores, the vilest feature of Capitalism's early days, the legal subjection of the workers, without doing anything to restore a genuine competition between producers.<sup>1</sup>

What then are we to make of the Fascist economic programme? First, we discover that the main strand of Fascist economic propaganda, the whole talk of "national planning," "national Socialism," and the "Corporate State," is sheer undiluted bluff. It corresponds to no reality whatever. Second, we find that the other element, the anti-monopoly, anti-big bank, anti-trust element, which flatly contradicts the planning talk, is never carried out in such a way as to prejudice the interests of a single big monopoly, bank or trust. All it comes down to in practice is the wrecking of the Trade Unions and Co-operatives and the reduction of the workers to that state of subjection out of which they have struggled during the last century. It means

<sup>1</sup> A form of Fascist wrecking, which was particularly prominent in Italy, was the wrecking of the Co-operative movement. This form of workers combination, which is becoming highly developed in Britain, would undoubtedly be one of the first victims of Fascism. Already, the National Government has opened the attack by imposing taxation on the Co-operative Societies.

the undoing of the whole of the work for which every present-day Trade Unionist has given his money and his energy : and for which hundreds of thousands of nameless worker heroes have struggled and have died.

. . . . .

We have now described Fascism. We have seen that its most salient characteristic is its bloodthirsty nationalism. But we have also seen that Fascist Imperialism is merely an extreme intensification of Capitalist Imperialism in general. Next, we have examined the Fascist economic programme and discovered its extraordinary emptiness. The sole element of reality in both the Corporate State, " planning " propaganda of Fascism, and in its anti-big business demagoguery, consists in the attempt either to fetter by compulsory arbitration, or to wreck by terroristic methods, the workers' organizations. And in this also the Fascists can hardly claim originality. All Capitalist Governments in times of crisis try to wreck or fetter the organizations of the workers.

In what, then, does Fascism consist ? Surely, this movement must have some definite, even if unavowed, aims and objects—some serious purpose. Are we not entitled to ask what that purpose may be ? Surely this is a legitimate

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question? It may be a period of suffering, of struggle, of the rigid curtailment of liberty, is necessary in order to rescue the world from its present plight. But if so, if we are called on to fight, to suffer, and to submit to an iron discipline, surely we are entitled to know the purpose of it all? And to this simple question, the Fascists return no answer.

All the same, Fascism has a definite, though unavowed, purpose. And our next task must be to discover what that purpose is. For we shall find that, when we have done that, we shall have at the same time found an answer to the question which we left unanswered at the end of Chapter III. We shall have discovered what it is that has undone the Labour and progressive parties in each and all of the Western Democracies.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PURPOSE OF FASCISM

TO-DAY we cannot blind ourselves to the true state of the world : to the weariness, feebleness and failure of the main progressive and pacific movements and parties ; to the rise of militant reaction and Fascism.

We live in a world which it has become a platitude to describe as a madhouse ; in which our poverty is only matched by our surfeit of commodities ; in which our ability to produce is only equalled by our ability to starve for lack of production ; in which we are about to slaughter each other as the only way we can think of to give each other employment. Can it be wondered at that in such a world the forces of unreason, of reaction and of despair, are in the ascendant ?

What we have to discover is the reason for the extraordinary reversal in fortune which has overtaken, in our time, the most progressive political parties. As a matter of fact there is no need for a new discovery in economic and social science in order to account for the

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decay of the progressive movements, the decay of economic activity and the rise of Fascism. A social theory which accounts for what has happened, and which has the advantage that it predicted, before they arose, the general characteristics of our time, has long been steadily propounded by one group within the general progressive movement. This is the Socialist analysis of society.

For the last half century and more Socialists have said with varying degrees of clarity, one thing. They have said that the continued and ever accelerating growth of technical and scientific knowledge and achievement, did not in itself, as the liberals supposed, ensure a steadily rising standard of life and civilization for the mass of humanity. They said that, on the contrary, the system of the private ownership of the means of production was of such a kind that, after a certain critical point had been reached, further technical and scientific progress would, so long as this system persisted, prove a curse instead of a blessing. They said that it would cause poverty and chaos instead of peace and plenty. They therefore alleged that since to check technical and scientific progress was both impracticable and profoundly at variance with the permanent interests of the race, it was becoming urgently necessary to abolish the

• system of the private ownership of the means of production. It was necessary to substitute for it a system of planned Socialist production.

We are still not so much concerned with the question of the merits of these alternative methods of organizing production, as with the question of the truth or falsity of this basic Socialist criticism of the view held by liberal progressives, that technical progress would, under the present economic system, carry us forward to a higher civilization. This is the critical point. For as we have said, the Socialists definitely alleged that unless the great change which they advocated was made in the social system—unless the private ownership of the means of production was abolished—technical progress would not only bring no benefits but would actually bring us disasters.

To be precise, they alleged, that if the private ownership of the factories, mines, etc., were continued, the growth of technical progress would bring us not leisure and plenty, but unemployment and starvation: not international organization and peace, but new methods of warfare incomparably more destructive of civilization than the old. In other words, the Socialists held that not only was the change in social organization which they advocated *desirable*, but that it was *necessary*—

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necessary, that is, to the continuance of civilization at all.

Thus the Socialists maintained that the historical trend of events was of quite a different kind to what the liberal progressives supposed. We were not, they said, being carried along on a swelling river of technical progress which would ultimately land us in a new and higher civilization, if only we did not upset the boat on the way. On the contrary, we were rapidly approaching a point where further technical progress would become incompatible, would become literally unworkable, with our present form of social and economic organization. And the more we tried to stick to our social system and yet to adopt a new and improved technique of production, the worse mess we should get into. In the end one thing or the other would have to go. Either we should have to scrap our existing social system and retain our technical progress, or we should have to retain our social system, scrap our technical progress, and go back to the simple, toilsome methods of production of an earlier day.

Now it would be absurd to pretend that in a short book like this, and in one, moreover, which is primarily devoted to another purpose, any adequate analytical proof of this Socialist contention could be given. Indeed no one can

to satisfy himself of the truth of the Socialist view without the serious study of the classical Capitalist economists, as well as of the Socialist classics themselves. But, after all, in many ways the best test of a social theory is its ability to account for the admitted phenomena of the day. And we can all apply this test to the Socialist theory of the incompatibility of our modern technique of production with the existing social system.

There is little doubt surely of the result. The Socialist theory of the incompatibility of our technical progress and our present social system is the one theory which can account in any way for the political and economic chaos of to-day. (The Capitalist economists are reduced to supposing, like Mr. Keynes, that our troubles are all due to some unlucky accident.) The incompatibility of modern methods of production with Capitalism is the one hypothesis which will give order and coherence to the otherwise baffling complexities of the present situation. It is the key to the puzzle, and until we have grasped this key the other pieces—the deterioration of the economic situation, the decay of the progressive parties, the appearance of Fascism, the onset of a new war—will not fit into place.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Many people suppose that the cause of our economic disorganization is not the private ownership of the means of production but some defect in the monetary system. The Fascists themselves use



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Moreover, although it is impossible to give here an analytical proof of this hypothesis, it is not difficult to state briefly the reasons by which the Socialists support it. Private, scattered, individual ownership of the means of production was, they say, a necessary phase which human society had perforce to go through. Comparatively simple, small and inexpensive means of production are appropriate to scattered individual ownership. In that stage of technical development a fairly large number of people can become owners of such instruments of production as will enable them to start up in business for themselves.

Moreover, when the instruments of production are small and cheap, production itself must be extremely toilsome. Hence its products will be scarce. The world will be genuinely poor, there will be a real shortage of commodities of all kinds. The urgent problem will be to produce everything and anything that men need.

this attractive theory for demagogic purposes. It would be foolish to attempt to demonstrate the illusory nature of the hopes of the monetary reformers in a footnote. We can only ask those who hold the view that our ills can be cured by monetary reform, without disturbing the private ownership of the means of production, to study not only the Marxian classics which deal with this subject (viz. *The Poverty of Philosophy*, especially Engels' Preface to the edition of 1884, the *Critique of Political Economy* and the early chapters of *Capital*) ; but also, if they do not accept Socialist authorities, the works of the newest school of Capitalist economists, notably Prof. Hayek's *Prices and Production*. The writings of this school quite effectively dispose of salvation by credit expansion without relying on any but strictly Capitalist arguments.

deeper and more violent crises. The position of the Social Democratic and progressive movements will, under such conditions, inevitably become worse. They will be driven more and more on to the defensive. The whole basis of their policy, the whole possibility of expanding the benefits of the workers, without dispossessing the capitalists, will be cut from under them. In an era of economic failure and contraction there can be no future for political movements based upon the hypothesis of rapid economic growth and expansion.

*We are driven therefore to the conclusion that the only possible way out for the progressive movements is to end the private ownership of the means of production.* But this is a very, very serious proposition. It is a far more serious proposition than many Socialists have been prepared to admit. Many Socialists, who have for years preached "the unavoidable necessity of ending the Capitalist system, of appropriating the privately owned means of production, have yet been unwilling to face the immense seriousness of the task which they proposed. For if, as we have submitted, an essential condition of the realization of the century-old hopes of the masses is the expropriation of the means of production, and the reorganization of production under a planned economic system, instead of under a

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prices-profits system, then the progressive movements in general, and the working class in particular, have a task of colossal magnitude immediately ahead of them.

• For it is clear that by whatever method it is proposed to accomplish the ending of the private ownership of the means of production, such a step must be a challenge to all the most powerful and privileged persons in the community. For these persons are just precisely the owners of the means of production, and they draw their privileges from the fact of that ownership.

Hence, we are driven to the conclusion that the realization of the great hope of the masses is the doom of the privileged and property-owning class. The one process cannot be realized without the other. They are in fact the same process looked at from opposite points of view. Here then is the explanation of the arrest and retreat of the progressive movements. The Labour movement in Britain and the Social Democratic movements elsewhere, are all halted before the formidable task of dispossessing the Capitalists. Their leaders are unwilling to recognize the necessity, and are acutely conscious of the magnitude of the task. Their hesitation and withdrawal before this task, is the fundamental reason for the plight

in which these parties and movements now find themselves.

This is the anchor at which the Labour ship is dragging. For as yet there is no clear recognition of the fact that, so long as the private ownership of the means of production continues, the economic situation will deteriorate, conditions for the fulfilment of Labour's mission of improving the lot of the masses will become more and more unfavourable, and the movement will be thrown more and more disastrously upon the defensive. There is as yet no adequate realization that the only remaining way forward is a way which must directly challenge, by deeds and not by words, the claim of a limited class of persons to hold as their personal property the means of production essential to the people's very life.

Are we not now in a position to understand the combined phenomenon of the decay of the progressive movements and the rise of Fascism? Let us briefly summarize the argument. We have come to that critical point of technical progress when it is not only *possible* but *necessary* to realize the high hopes, for material security, for leisure, for the benefits of civilization, which the peoples of the West have entertained for a century. Thus it is now not merely technically possible, by using our modern machines, to

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give everyone enough to eat, to wear and to shelter in, but it is technically necessary to do so, unless the new machines are to cause unemployment, chaos and war, instead of peace and plenty.

Then why do we not do so? Why do we remain ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clothed? Because the system of the private ownership of the means of production, with its indispensable prices and profits method of self-regulation, has made it impossible for us to use our new machines. This system is incompatible with the provision of a stable and planned economic system under which it would be possible to resolve the paradox of unemployment and want into its rational elements of work and plenty.

In just the same way it is now technically possible to maintain such constant communication between all nations that a world organization such as could alone make international peace a reality, has become a perfectly practical thing. But not only has such a world organization become *practical*, it has become *necessary*. For that same technical progress has made war so destructive that civilization may well not survive it.

Again, therefore, we discover an incompatibility, this time between modern machinery

and a world organized in independent, sovereign, Capitalist States. For a world system of independent, sovereign, Capitalist States, unchecked by any real international organization must mean periodic wars. And you may retain war as a world institution or you may retain modern machinery, e.g. the aeroplane, the tractor, or tank, etc., etc. But you cannot retain both, or rather if you do you will blot out civilization under a hail of bombs.<sup>1</sup>

And these two incompatibilities are really the same. For is it not clear that the private ownership of the means of production and independent, sovereign States are parts of the same world system and that the basic discord of modern life, from which all our otherwise inexplicable misfortunes flow, is between this system and modern machinery? The Capitalist economic and international system and our new methods of production cannot be combined. And every year, every month, every week, every day, science and its application to industry improve and enlarge our methods of production. Yet our social system remains based on private ownership. The pressure

<sup>1</sup> Capitalist statesmen have been reduced to regretting that such things as aeroplanes have ever been invented. Cf. Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Churchill's recent speeches in the House of Commons. The Capitalists and Fascists have become, at any rate in fantasy, our latter-day Luddites dreaming of the possibility of killing the machines, lest they kill each other with the machines.

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becomes greater and greater: it becomes more and more impossible to maintain both of these two mutually opposed elements. Something has to give way. In the words of the Nazis, "something has to happen."

But it can be one of two things. Either we can abolish the private ownership of the means of production, keep our modern machines, organize a system of planned production and make possible a renewed advance towards material plenty for the whole population and a world organization for peace: or we can, at all costs, retain private ownership combined with "the international anarchy" and somehow destroy our power to produce. For then, we could go back to earlier, simpler, much more toilsome methods of production, which would be again compatible with Capitalism. And, the method of wrecking our machines could only be the method of devastating wars.

Have we not at last discovered the purpose of Fascism? Just as the purpose of Socialism is to take the first road forward, so the aim of Fascism is to take the second road back. The purpose of Fascism is to defend by violence the private ownership of the means of production, even though our modern civilization has become incompatible with a social system based upon private ownership.

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We must define Fascism as the movement for the preservation by violence, and at all costs, of the private ownership of the means of production. This and nothing else is the real purpose of Fascism. When we understand this, everything else in the apparent madness of Fascism becomes comprehensible. Fascism will try to destroy in war our marvellous powers of production, and to crush democracy, pacifism, and internationalism, because these things are becoming incompatible with Capitalism. Fascism is the enemy of science, of rationalism, of educational progress for the same reason. Fascism kills, tortures and terrorises in defence of the right of the capitalists to keep the fields, factories and mines of the world as their private property.



## CHAPTER VIII

### A FASCIST FUTURE?

NOW THAT we have discovered the purpose of Fascism we must put the question, can Fascism succeed? Can the Fascists successfully defend the private ownership of the means of production? Can they succeed in destroying liberty, democracy, pacifism, the Trade Unions modern technical progress, everything that threatens it, either directly or indirectly? And, even if they can do this, can they then succeed in setting up a stable and permanent world system of Fascist States?

Now, there is not the slightest doubt that it is possible for a Fascist movement to succeed, in the sense of obtaining all power for itself in a particular State. We do not even need the examples of Germany and Italy to prove that. For in fact a Fascist movement does not really have to conquer power at all. Its struggle with the older forms of the Capitalist State is very much in the nature of a stage battle. For Fascism is merely the militant arm of the largest property owners, who are of course already

in power. Its aim is not to seize power, but merely to retain power. This fact is obscured, however, by the composition of the Fascist parties.

The core of these parties always consists of two classes of people, the lower middle class and the peasants. (For no one has hitherto observed a big banker or landowner fighting his own class battles for himself. These gentlemen fight, both at home and abroad, by proxy alone.) Now the shopkeepers and peasants have, of course, by no means the same interests as the great Capitalists. The rank and file of Fascist parties do not realize that they are being used as hired mercenaries for the defence of the ownership of the factories, fields and mines by the great Capitalists. For the Fascists, we must readily admit, are very expert at duping their supporters. Also, they are very frank about it. For example, Hitler, in his autobiography, criticizes the tameness of the propaganda methods of his rivals. "The German," he writes, "has not the slightest notion how a people must be misled if the adherence of the masses is sought." (The first eleven editions of *My Struggle*. The passage was deleted from the twelfth edition.)

Many rank and file Fascists genuinely suppose that their movement is out to accomplish

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all sorts of progressive things. They are effectively taken in by the façade of the Corporate State ; they respond to a more or less idealistic nationalism. They often express the view that Fascism is the " practical " way of accomplishing what Socialism has promised. They genuinely do not see the impossibility of any form of planning while the private ownership of the means of production persists. They sincerely believe, in spite of the fact that each successive Fascist Government when it gets into power does nothing of the sort, that their movement will " nationalize the big banks and trusts," and will discipline the capitalists as well as the workers.

It is of course to cater for the illusions of the lower middle class and the peasant rank and file of the Fascist parties that the elaborate code of economic demagoguery was invented. Some observers of Fascism (notably Professor Scott Nearing) have even deduced from the vaguely anti-Capitalist tone which pervades Fascist parties during their early stages, that Fascism is essentially a movement of the lower middle class, the class which stands between the workers and the capitalists, and is primarily directed against both. Such a view, surely, attaches too much importance to Fascist words and too little to Fascist deeds. Professor Scott

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Nearing agrees, of course, that it is universally observable that when the Fascists come into power they do not support the interests of the lower middle class, but the interests of the biggest bankers and capitalists. ("The Fascist Government frankly champions the cause of big business."—*Fascism*, by Professor Scott Nearing, The Vanguard Press, New York.) He explains this by saying that Fascism, although started as a movement of the middle class, ruined by the Imperialist consolidation of Capitalism, becomes a coalition of all the propertied and privileged classes against the working class.

Is not the truth rather that Fascism is from the very beginning a movement owned and controlled by the very richest and biggest capitalists, who use the lower middle class and the peasants as their indispensable instruments for the destruction of the working class?

Professor Scott Nearing is surely deceived when he speaks of Fascism being a revolutionary force :

"At the centre of the fascist movement," he writes, "is the middle class, seeking to save itself from decimation or annihilation by seizing power and establishing its own political and social institutions. It therefore

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has the essential characteristics of a social revolutionary movement, since its success means a shift of the centre of power from one social class to another."

This is, we submit, an entire misconception. Fascism is not a movement of the lower middle class seeking to seize power from the capitalist class : its success does not mean the shift of power from one social class to another. On the contrary, it is a movement of the capitalist class using the lower middle class and peasants as its instrument, and its success means merely a consolidation of power in the hands of that same capitalist class which already possesses it. Naturally this fact immensely simplifies the Fascist's task. Indeed, Professor Scott Nearing recognises this in practice, for on p. 17 of his pamphlet he writes :

" The fascist seizure of power was greatly facilitated by the fact that, with minor exceptions, such as Soviet Bavaria and Bolshevik Hungary, much of the economic and political machinery was already in the hands of fascist supporters, who owned property, held important jobs, dominated, and in many respects controlled, the technical and professional fields. If, as is almost always the

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case, these key positions include important posts in the army and navy, the war and naval ministries, the post, telegraph and other agencies which are likely to be determining factors in a revolutionary situation, the fascists merely proclaim the possession of that which they already occupy."

In what sense, then, do the Fascists seize power? Only in the sense that they seize it from under their own pillows. For power, real power, was always, even in the States which had maintained democratic forms, in the hands of the capitalists. And the Fascists are only the capitalists and their dupes in fancy dress.

The actual history of the way in which the Fascists have come to power in Germany and Italy confirms this view. In Germany it must be obvious to all that Hitler did not seize power. On the contrary, the Nazi movement was during the autumn of 1932 in evident and admitted decline. And then President von Hindenburg and his advisers suddenly handed over the power of the State to Hitler—without even the pretence of a struggle. And it was precisely, as we shall see, *because* German Fascism was in decline ; it was *because* there was an evident danger of the blunting of this last remaining weapon of German capitalism that

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the nervousness of the German ruling classes about handing over the helm of State to Hitler evaporated in a single day. In Italy, there was more pretence of conflict. But, as a matter of fact, the march on Rome was an exceedingly mild affair. The State forces were never once used against the Fascists, and Mussolini was given power by the Italian ruling classes for fundamentally the same reason as was Hitler : viz. that he and his movement represented the best available means of continuing Italian capitalism.

Fascism, then, is in no sense of the word revolutionary ; it is essentially a movement of counter-revolutionary violence. Fascist violence has never been turned against the capitalists or their State machine. The dog has never yet bitten its master. (This does not exclude, however, the possibility of sections of a Fascist movement, which may be imbued with anti-Capitalist ideas, from breaking away and becoming genuinely, although confusedly, revolutionary : this may well happen in Germany.) Fascist violence is organized for one purpose alone, and it has never been used for any other. The purpose of Fascism, both before it has the State power given to it and afterwards, is to smash those institutions which threaten private ownership—to smash the

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Fascism will, if it achieves widespread power, attempt to set up an economic system differing fundamentally from present-day Capitalist Imperialism.

Professor Scott Nearing believes that Fascism will make such an attempt. He considers that the characteristic Fascist doctrine of "autarchy"—of national economic self-sufficiency, that is—constitutes such a new economic system, differing fundamentally from contemporary Imperialism. He says that the first item of the Fascist programme is to "organize the self-sufficient State." For this purpose, he points out, world trade has to be shattered. A violent policy of economic nationalism has to be instituted, under which prohibitive tariffs, direct prohibition of imports, etc., more and more cut off the nations of the world from each other. And he deduces that such a policy would mean the gradual abandonment of modern methods of mass production.

For mass production, by means of our marvelous modern machines and a world-wide system of trade, must, he argues, obviously go together. Modern productive methods, with their immensely expensive capital equipment, are unworkable unless there exists an enormous market for their products : and this in turn implies at any rate some degree of the division



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of labour and industrial specialization between different countries. Thus the ideal of autarchy, or economic self-sufficiency, for each nation-state conflicts with the continuance of modern civilization. It requires a general lowering of the standard of life, a gradual return for all humanity to the endless drudgery, the darkness, ignorance and superstition of peasant life. Professor Scott Nearing gives a vivid picture of the logical conclusion of this process :

“ The search for a self-sufficient economic unit will lead the fascists, as it led those of their predecessors who helped to liquidate the Roman Empire, to a splitting up of economic units until they reach the village ; the manor ; and the local market town. Village economy is almost self-sufficient. A complex of a score of agricultural villages and one handcraft-trading village relying chiefly upon barter can continue practically independent of the outside world. Short of this level, however, there is no unit which can pretend to economic self-sufficiency. The search for an area in which economic self-sufficiency is workable leads straight back to such forms of village economy as can be found to-day in portions of Central Europe, India and China. . . .

“Automatic machinery will be abandoned with the abandonment of mass production. The village will rely on hand-agriculture and handcrafts. Railroads will disappear. Roads will be tracks through the mud. Automobiles will vanish. Bridges will be destroyed in the course of the constantly recurring wars and military expeditions and forays. Pack animals defended by private guards will ford the streams and make their way, single file, over narrow winding tracks. If this picture seems fantastic to a modern American or European, let him compare Roman imperial economy in 50 A.D. with the economy of the same territory in 650 A.D. Rostovtzev tells the story with a wealth of detail in his *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, tracing with particular care the decay of agriculture ; the rise in taxes ; the cessation of production ; the abandonment of trade ; the crumbling of imperial economy and the return to local economy. Those facts are to-day unquestioned, but how fantastic they would have appeared to an educated citizen of Augustan Rome.”

Now there is no doubt at all that the conquest and retention of power by the Fascists in the major States of the world would result

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in the destruction of civilization. But Professor Scott Nearing's picture suggests that the Fascists would destroy civilization by an application of the doctrine of economic contraction and self-sufficiency—by a conscious turning away from Imperialist expansion. This is, we venture to suggest, a misconception.

As Professor Scott Nearing himself recognizes, the Fascists could find no stable basis for a new and simpler economic system before they got back to "village economy" as it existed in Europe before, say, A.D. 1200. For just as beyond Capitalism and Imperialism there is nothing short of a planned Socialist economy, there is no stopping-place, if you turn back from Capitalist Imperialism, until you come to Feudalism. If you stop short of that—if you stop, for example, at the point of the trading, national (as opposed to Imperial), hand-manufacturing economy of, say, 1600—you will soon find yourself back again at Imperialism. For the profits-prices system is a powerful and elastic thing. The formidable impulsions of private accumulation will soon overcome any set-backs if they are given the barest possibility of freedom of trade and production. They will soon carry you back to the point of Imperialist world economy—to that point which we have now reached. And this is

the point which marks, as we have discovered to our cost, the exhaustion of the possibilities of the private ownership system. Hence, in order that the Fascists should apply in practice their talk of "autarchy," they would have literally to enact the legislation of Samuel Butler's imaginary State of Erewhon.

The people of Erewhon prohibited any machine more complicated than the cart: they pulled up their railway-lines, smashed their power stations, destroyed their factories. For they felt, as we do now, that their machines were taking charge of them and carrying them along to chaos and disaster. No one, however, least of all the Fascists, can suppose that even the beginnings of such a programme are a practical possibility for a Fascist State. On the contrary, Fascist States, in spite of all their professed love of the peasants and artisans, have in practice actually to stimulate that very large-scale industry which destroys the older methods of production. And this for a very cogent reason. The war-strength of a modern State depends primarily on its large-scale industry. In a modern war that nation will win, other things being reasonably equal, which can hurl or drop the greatest quantities of steel and explosives upon its opponents. The Fascists recognize this.

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For example, Virginia Gayda, an Italian Fascist writing in *Gerachia*, July 1926, discusses the methods which Italy must pursue in her struggle, both economic and military, with other nations. There must be, he writes, "a reduction of the costs of production and a maximum utilization of all its raw materials and combustibles, to be obtained by an application of all the most progressive technical and economic systems of production and distribution. . . . Strength and progress lie in the great co-ordinated unities : science has the victory. . . . Woe to those countries that do not grasp this inexorable law of production and evolution. The technique of military war is developing towards new arms and new scientific elaborations. For the principle of extensiveness is being substituted for that of intensity. Aerial and vertical arms are being added to the horizontal lines of battle and are displacing the latter."

There is certainly nothing Erehwonian about Signor Gayda ! Nor can there ever be anything consciously Erehwonian about Fascism. For the truth is that Fascism is not in the least anti-Imperialist. It does not, as Professor Scott Nearing supposes, represent an attempt by the middle class to draw back from the stage of Imperialist economy. On the contrary, Fascism

is a weapon of the Capitalist class driven to intensify Imperialist aggression. In spite of Fascist anti-big-business theory, Fascist practice is subservient to the interests of the very biggest trusts and trustified banks. And the interests of these organizations are necessarily Imperialist, aggressive and acquisitive to the *n*th degree.

Hence Fascism cannot really do much to put into practice its policy of economic self-sufficiency. Fascist States cannot possibly draw off from the ever-sharpening Imperialist conflict. True they will try to limit imports in order to increase their strength for resisting blockade in war, but they will, and do, all try to push up their exports by every possible means. A true policy of economic self-sufficiency, of autarchy, would curtail exports as much as imports. And the Fascists never dream of suggesting this. (Hitler, in particular, spoke strongly on this subject in his first declaration as Chancellor before the Reichstag on March 23rd, 1933. "The National Government," he said, "is to nothing more opposed than to the restriction of exports.") Fascist foreign trade policy is merely an intensification of that policy of minimizing imports and maximizing exports which is pursued by all Imperialist States today. (This policy is most attractive when looked at from the point of view of each State

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individually, but it is ludicrously contradictory when looked at from the point of view of all States taken together.)

Goering has already been cited to show that a policy of Imperialist expansion at any hazard, and not any drawing back within national boundaries, is absolutely essential to the internal, social policy by which the German Fascist State hopes to fill the empty bellies of its supporters. Thus the prospect held out to us by Fascism is not, as Professor Scott Nearing seems to imply, one of the slow destruction of world trade and modern mass production by the conscious application of a policy of extreme economic self-sufficiency by Fascist States.

The true prospect of Fascism is rather one of a new and far greater world war in the immediate future as the result of a policy of violent Imperialist expansion. For this policy will be forced on the Fascist States by the attempt of each of them to find the markets, raw materials, etc., which are indispensable for the mass production industries which each will make a desperate effort to retain. A new war for the re-partition of the world in favour of the States which came badly out of the last war is, inevitably and unavoidably, the next important item on the programme, for example, of the real owners of

German Fascism—the great German industrialists and bankers. Thus, although we fully agree with Professor Scott Nearing that the Fascists will, if we give them the chance, destroy modern methods of production and trade, and the civilization which is based upon them, since these methods have become incompatible with the private ownership of the means of production, yet they will not do so by any conscious policy of autarchy.

No, Fascism will actually foster the highest forms of modern technique in the short period of preparation for a new war, but it will do so only to smash them, and with them, if Fascism is allowed to run its full course, all modern civilization, in a series of vast new Imperialist wars for the partition, and then the re-partition, of the world.

But it is inconceivable that Fascism will be allowed to run its full course. Each of its wars will involve the arming of important sections of the working class. Each will put unbearable pressure, unimagined suffering, frightful privations on the workers. Each will certainly be accompanied by working-class revolutions. Nor can we doubt for a moment that these revolutions will be successful, and that there will arise working-class powers which will be able to abandon Imperialist policy and yet to



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solve the economic problem, because they will be willing to end the private ownership of the means of production.

Thus, the alternative which faces the world is not between a working-class civilization based upon planned Socialist production, and a Fascist civilization of Corporate States, "Third Empires," or what not. Our alternative is a working-class Socialist civilization, or the destruction of all civilization and a return to the dark ages.

. . . . .

Fascism, we conclude, may succeed in the sense that the capitalists may, if the workers give them the chance, change their present political helmsmen for Fascist helmsmen. But Fascism cannot possibly succeed in the sense of building up a workable, stable Fascist civilization. For the essence of Fascist policy is not autarchy or economic self-sufficiency (except as a method of increasing the nation's war strength), but a super-violent Imperialism. The road, then, to the Fascist destruction of modern technique is the unconscious road of world war—not the conscious road of any attack upon the interests of the trusts and banks by a policy of autarchy.

We face either the destruction of civilization

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in a series of Fascist wars "for space and employment," or the overthrow of Fascist Imperialism by the workers. For the workers alone can end the private ownership of the means of production, and so set humanity once more upon the path of progress. The self-destructive nature of Fascism, doomed as it is to ruthless internecine conflict, gives us the assurance that the workers will triumph, albeit perhaps, after terrible and unnecessary sacrifices, and that humanity will go forward to a new epoch in the history of civilization.

PART II

HOW CAN WE DEFEAT  
FASCISM?



## CHAPTER IX

### WILL FASCISM COME TO BRITAIN?

BY THE autumn of the year 1930, the British Labour movement had been brought to a dead stop. The ever worsening economic situation had compelled the Labour Government which was then in office to postpone all its plans for the extension of social services. The Cabinet was beginning to consider, but had not yet accepted, the proposals for their curtailment which the Treasury officials were politely, but ever more insistently, putting before them. The tide was at slack water. The Labour party had come to that turning-point which, we suggested, each progressive party has come to in turn. It had come to the point when further progress along the old lines becomes impossible, when the ground of political conflict invisibly shifts and the progressive party finds itself defending former gains instead of demanding new ones.

To have witnessed at close quarters such a turn of the social and economic tides of a

nation is an experience. In 1930, I was a Labour Member of Parliament and the Parliamentary Private Secretary to Sir Oswald Mosley. We had been engaged during the preceding year in a long-drawn-out struggle with the existing leadership of the Labour party. This leadership consisted, in effect, of Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Snowden (as he then was) and Mr. J. H. Thomas, with Mr. Henderson as a somewhat uneasy passenger. Mosley had, at the formation of the Government in June 1929, been appointed as a lieutenant to Mr. J. H. Thomas, who had been charged with the task of reducing unemployment. Some six months after Mr. Thomas' appointment, unemployment began to increase to an unparalleled extent.

Now Mosley brought to Treasury Chamber, Whitehall, where we had our offices, a genuinely unsophisticated desire to do something. I brought to the same inauspicious destination a quite ludicrously naïve belief that it was both possible and desirable to begin forthwith to carry out the programme on which we had been elected. We were very soon in bitter conflict, not merely with the egregious Mr. Thomas, but, and this mattered a thousand times more, with that formidable body of men, the officials of His Majesty's Treasury. We

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discovered, by process of collision, that, if we were the elected representatives of the British people, the Civil Servants were the permanent trustees of British Capitalism.

In the early summer of 1930, Mosley resigned from the Government, after having had all his proposals for finding work turned down, not without acrimonious comment, from the Treasury officials and from Mr. Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There followed a period in which Mosley attempted to rally the members of the Parliamentary Labour party to the support of his proposals. These proposals consisted of extensions of pension schemes, combined with proposals for a large programme of public works financed by loan. In a series of tense party meetings, he discovered that the 280 Labour Members of Parliament no more desired the hazards of action and of struggle than did their colleagues in the Government. They, like the Ministers, felt in their bones, that at present there was nothing to be done. "Some day, no doubt, the economic tide will turn." (They were confident of this, for their faith in the recuperative powers of British Capitalism was undimmed.) "And then the party will be able to go forward with schemes for the extension of social services. If the tide does not turn . . . but it will turn ; and,

anyhow, Mosley is a jealous aristocrat who does not understand the Labour movement." Such is a summary of the views of the Labour Members of Parliament at that time.

I recollect the spectacle of Mosley sitting silent and alone, brooding with an indescribable bitterness, as the elderly, portly Trade Union officials and nervous pacifist intellectuals filed out of a party meeting at which they had demonstrated their undiminished confidence in Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. A stab of premonition flashed through my mind. How had the Italian Social Democrats looked at the Congress of the Italian Socialist party which expelled the editor of the *Avanti*? Had they not been sure that they had finished with that tiresome fellow Mussolini? I do not know if Mosley's premonitions were of a more detailed character.

All that Mosley was able to accomplish in the summer of 1930 was the collection of a small group of Labour Members of Parliament. We, who composed that group, felt, somewhat more acutely than our colleagues, the pressure of events. We foresaw, with unpleasant clarity, the *débâcle* which actually occurred the following August. It seemed to us necessary to say what we thought the Government ought to have done, and ought still to do, in order to prepare



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for the crisis ahead. We issued, in the November of 1930, a manifesto signed by seventeen Labour M.P.s setting out our programme of "national reconstruction." Mosley, however, was by this time working on far more ambitious lines. He perceived that if a programme of "national reconstruction" was to have even a chance of being put into effect, it must secure the support of *both* of "the two nations"—it must be an agreed programme, *agreed to, that is, by both Capital and Labour*. And, in order that such agreement might be possible, it was necessary, Mosley concluded, that its sponsors should cut themselves adrift from the Labour party and appeal to the nation as a new political force, without definite association with either Labour or Capital.

In the meanwhile, we composed a fairly detailed statement of our policy and published it as a pamphlet. Our policy was, we felt, of such a kind as to be supported by everybody. In the event, it was supported by nobody. We supposed that, as it involved neither an attack upon the standard of life of the workers nor an attack upon Capital, both Labour and Capital would agree to it. In practice, since it did not promise to the Capitalists the reductions in wages, unemployment benefit, etc., which they required, and did not offer to the workers any

immediate relief, neither side took any interest in it. The whole incident is reminiscent of the old story of the German professor lecturing on the question of a universal language. "Volutpuck is ze universal language," said the professor. "Where is it spoken?" asked the student. "No vers," answered the professor.

Simultaneously with the publication of our detailed programme, Mosley proposed to the seventeen signatories of our original manifesto that we should resign from the Labour party and form a new organization. In the event, only Dr. Forgan, Mr. W. J. Brown, Mr. Oliver Baldwin, the late Lady Cynthia Mosley and I sent letters to the Prime Minister refusing the "whip" of the Labour party. And Mr. Brown and Mr. Baldwin subsequently decided not to join the New party but to remain independent. At the same time, Mr. W. E. D. Allen resigned from the Conservative party in order to join the new organisation. It was noticeable to us that Mosley attached great importance to his adhesion, since it emphasized the non-Labour and "national" character of the New party.

At this moment, however, Mosley himself fell dangerously ill with pneumonia. Thus it occurred that the New party was actually launched, and the nation-wide tour of meetings which had been arranged was conducted, by

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Dr. Forgan, Mr. Allan Young (Mosley's personal private secretary), Lady Cynthia Mosley and myself. The new political organization, which was thus launched in its leader's absence, was certainly not a Fascist party. It was not nearly so practical or realistic as that. It was rather, as anyone who attended those initial meetings will remember, an entirely Utopian appeal for social compromise. Lady Cynthia Mosley, Dr. Forgan, Mr. Young, and I, who were the principal spokesmen, attacked the failure of the Labour Government even to attempt to fulfil its pledges to the electorate ; for the rest, we expounded our programme of "national reconstruction," or "national planning."

This was all very well in its way, but it soon became clear, even to us, that something more was needed. The position of social compromise was becoming untenable. It was clear that the inexorable facts of the situation would very soon drive the New party either to the Left, as a party of working-class revolt, or to the Right, as a party of ruling-class reaction against such limitation upon Capitalist freedom of action as had been gradually imposed during the last hundred years.

I do not know to what extent Mosley foresaw this from the beginning. It is very doubtful

if he ever believed in the possibility of obtaining that universal agreement for our programme of reconstruction of which we dreamed. But I cannot gauge the extent to which he, from the outset, had determined on the full Fascist course. It must be remembered that Mosley, being no economist, no more saw the impossibility of planning, without the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production, than we did. (He probably does not see it now.)

In any event, very soon after his recovery from his illness, Mosley became aware of the unreality of the New party position—if indeed it had ever been more to him than a necessary transition stage to Fascism. A by-election at Ashton-under-Lyne, a Lancashire cotton town, was the turning-point. At this election the New party for the first time put forward a parliamentary candidate, Mr. Allan Young. After an intensive campaign, he obtained some 4,000 votes. This comparative electoral failure opened Mosley's eyes to the impossibility of securing, in the Britain of 1931, a sort of voluntary inter-class armistice which would enable him to reconstruct society to the satisfaction of everyone and the disturbance of no one. (Or it may well be that he merely felt that the by-election had been necessary to demonstrate to

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his ex-Labour colleagues the necessity of a new line.)

I recollect the figure of Mosley standing on the town hall steps at Ashton-under-Lyne, facing the enormous crowd which entirely filled the wide, cobbled market-square. The result of the election had just been announced, and it was seen that the intervention of the New party had defeated the Labour candidate and elected the Conservative. The crowd consisted of most of the keenest workers in the Labour party in all the neighbouring Lancashire towns. (Four or five million workers live within a tram-ride of Ashton.) The crowd was violently hostile to Mosley and the New party. It roared at him, and, as he stood facing it, he said to me, "That is the crowd that has prevented anyone doing anything in England since the war." At that moment British Fascism was born. At that moment of passion, and of some personal danger, Mosley found himself almost symbolically aligned against the workers. He had realized in action that his programme could only be carried out after the crushing of the workers and their organizations.

After Ashton, Mosley began more and more to use the word Fascism in private. Those members of the New party who, though they did

not regret their break with the Labour leaders, were certainly not prepared to be Fascists, became more and more alarmed. Mr. Allan Young and myself were the two members of the Governing Council of the New party who were principally disturbed. We had been for some years past Mosley's closest lieutenants and we were willing to carry self-deception very far, much too far indeed, in order to avoid a break which was extremely painful to both of us. We pretended to ourselves that his talk about Fascism "did not mean anything." During the summer of 1931, however, new and definite signs of Mosley's determination to turn the New party into a Fascist type of organization became apparent.

For months the council wrangled over the question of what was discreetly called "the Youth movement." In fact, this organization represented Mosley's determination to create a private army. He had seen, with admirable realism, that the only thing that really matters in a Fascist party is the creation of a disciplined, military and, so far as possible, armed, force which can be used to break by terror "that crowd which has prevented anyone doing anything in England since the war."

The army of the Fascist terror was to be (and is now being) recruited ostensibly for such

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purposes as keeping order at meetings, engaging in athletic exercises, forming boxing and fencing clubs and the like. But Mosley naturally could not in the end maintain in argument with his colleagues that these trivial objects were the real purpose of "the Youth movement." He had to admit to us that this force was to be used in the revolutionary situation which we all agreed (and this is perhaps the one point on which we do still agree) must sooner or later come upon Great Britain. But on which side was our army to be used? asked Young and I. On neither side, was Mosley's answer. It was to come down on the supine Government and the disorderly workers and knock their heads together. And what next? we asked. Having obtained power in this way what should we do? Impose the Corporate State, declared Mosley.

Now Young and I had at that time no clear idea of what the Corporate State might be. But the more Mosley talked about it, the more it seemed to be remarkably like Capitalism: or rather it seemed to be Capitalism minus all the things which the workers had won during the last century of struggle. Our doubts grew and grew. Our personal loyalty to Mosley, with whom we had been through the long exacting struggle with the Labour party

leadership, came into violent collision with our whole political and social outlook.

Certainly we had no one to blame but ourselves. We had got ourselves into an impossible position, partly by weakly allowing personal loyalties to blind our eyes and partly owing to defective comprehension of economic and social reality. The actual breaking-point came upon that touchstone of the modern world, our attitude to Soviet Russia. I was asked to write a memorandum defining the New party's attitude to Soviet Russia. I wrote an unequivocally pro-Russian document. Mosley equally unequivocally rejected it, and gave, quite frankly, his real reason for doing so. If the New party adopted a pro-Russian attitude, all hopes of support from the Conservatives and capitalists would be gone. Immediately after the Council meeting at which this discussion took place, Young and I resigned from the New party. This proved to be the end of the New party, and the hopeless attempt at obtaining the agreement of Capital and Labour for a quite impracticable policy of national reconstruction.

The fatal defect of our whole policy, from its very first beginnings, in the memoranda which Mosley, whilst still a Minister, submitted to the Labour Cabinet in February 1930, was that, equally with the policy of the Government



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which it criticized, it ignored the overriding fact of the situation. It ignored the fact that the continued deterioration of the British Capitalist system made impossible *any* programme of social advance, until and unless the task of taking away the means of production from the Capitalists had been faced and accomplished. And this unavoidably revolutionary task we burked quite as much as did the members and supporters of the Labour Government.

Soon after the General Election of 1931, Mosley abandoned all circumlocution and called his movement the Union of British Fascists. In April 1933, Mosley visited Rome simultaneously with Goering, von Papen and other Nazi leaders. He took part in various Fascist parades and ceremonies.

This is, in brief outline, the story of the birth of British Fascism. I have lived through this experience. It is one which must stamp all who undergo it with an indelible impression. The path which leads to the Fascist terror has a most attractive entrance. Those who have lost their way, and there are many such, in the baffling complexities of modern life, are tempted to discover in Fascism an easy solution of their difficulties. They see, as I saw, the beckoning lights of social peace, economic security for all and a gradual reconstruction

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of society based on a new social compact between Capital and Labour. But these are marsh lights. There is no easy way forward, nor ever has been, for the human race. The Fascist will-o'-the-wisp leads direct to an unspeakable terror aimed at the destruction of the organizations of the workers, and of everything that is aspiring, merciful and intelligent, in the world.

. . . . .

There remains the question of whether any Fascist movement, either that of Sir Oswald Mosley, or another, has a future in Great Britain. Many people undoubtedly feel able to answer "No" to this question. Many of the spokesmen of the Labour party take this comfortable view. Mr. Morrison told us in a recent speech (April 1933) that there was "no material support for Fascism in the Scandinavian or Anglo-Saxon countries." Mr. G. D. H. Cole makes the same point more explicitly. It is worth while to analyse his statement, since it has been repeated in different forms by a number of the best-known Labour writers and speakers. Mr. Cole, writing in the *New Statesman and Nation*, for April 7th, 1933, says :

"The conditions do not exist in Great

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Britain to-day for the growth of Fascism *à la Hitler* or *à la Mussolini*. We have no ruined middle classes on a scale sufficient to provide the necessary recruits ; we have no economic suffering, save in a few areas, extreme enough to drive men to desperate ventures out of sheer despair ; and, most important of all, we are not suffering under the psychology of defeat which has been at the back of both the German and the Italian movements."

This sounds most reassuring. But it is, unfortunately, only too easy, when we come to examine this statement, to discover in it an expression of Mr. Cole's natural desire to comfort himself rather than any objective weighing of the evidence. How else can we explain the strange errors and half truths to which Mr. Cole, a social critic of great influence and experience, commits himself? For instance, he tells us that we are safe from Fascism in Britain, because "the most important of all" the causes of Fascism in Germany and Italy was "the psychology of defeat" which existed in those countries. But Italy emerged as a victor not a vanquished nation from the last war. It is true that her victory did not bring her all the benefits which she expected. But is that not

true of all the nations which took part in the war? Do the British people to-day think that "the land fit for heroes to live in" has been realized at last?

Mr. Cole's next point is that we have in Britain, "save in a few areas," no economic suffering extreme enough to drive men to desperate ventures. If the excepted areas were defined as, say, South Wales, Lancashire, industrial Scotland, Durham and Northumberland, the Black Country and the Potteries, plus the West Riding of Yorkshire, he might be able to make out a case. But then something in the order of magnitude of half of the population of Britain lives in these distressed areas.

And even in the comparatively prosperous areas (London, the Home Counties and parts of the Midlands), it would be easy to find not merely individual cases but whole patches of mass suffering which should certainly satisfy Mr. Cole's criterion. It is true, however, that in these areas a proportion of the working class retains a standard of life sufficiently high to colour its political outlook. There is no occasion, however, to enter upon a polemic with Mr. Cole on the exact degree of suffering endured to-day by the workers of Britain. For the real answer to him is to ask him how long

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he supposes that these oases of comparatively tolerable working-class conditions will endure?

And this question applies equally to his remaining point. There is no need to worry about Fascism in Britain, Mr. Cole is convinced, because "we have no ruined middle class on a scale sufficient to provide the recruits." This is a remarkable argument to come from a leading Socialist. It implies that Mr. Cole believes that British Imperialist Capitalism will be indefinitely able to maintain the present affluence of the British middle class. We find here yet another instance of that unconquerable faith in British Imperialism which some leaders of the Labour party, almost alone, retain to-day. If we could believe that the economic crisis would, permanently, depart, that slowly but surely we should continue to "turn the corner" until a golden age of stable, peaceful, pleasant Capitalism stretched before the British middle class, then truly there would be no need to worry about Fascism. But, then, in that case there would be small opportunity to think of Socialism either.

It is, of course, open for Mr. Cole to reply that he does not imply this at all: that he realizes that there can be no return to a stable Capitalism, and that he has repeatedly stated that our only hope for stability and progress is

the initiation of "a bold Socialist programme." But this line of argument leads to an even stranger conclusion. Does Mr. Cole, then, believe that Socialism can be achieved without disturbing the British middle class? We cannot but suspect that just this, namely, the belief in the possibility of establishing Socialism without the privileged classes being seriously incommoded, is the more or less subconscious background to the theories of the "New Fabians," the members of the Socialist League, and the other intellectual leaders of the Socialist Left Wing of the Labour party. For, if this is not their view, what guarantee against the rise of Fascism is there in the fact that the middle class is not yet ruined?

Is it not clear that, the moment we really face the facts, we must admit that the British middle class is absolutely certain to be first threatened (the process has begun) and then ruined? Its ruin may be encompassed either by the decline and disintegration of British Capitalist Imperialism (this is what will actually happen) or, on Mr. Cole's hypothesis, by his "bold Socialist programme," carried out by another Labour Government. And does not this assure us that, on Mr. Cole's own argument, British Fascism will not lack for recruits?

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It is quite true that certain special circumstances which have attended the rise of Fascism, were some of them peculiar to Italy, some of them to Germany. In Italy the continued predominance of the peasants was unquestionably a factor—and it was a factor which does not exist at all in Britain, or to the same extent in Germany. In Germany, on the other hand, the psychology of defeat was undoubtedly of great importance. It is, however, the worst possible error to suppose that the predominant reason for the growth of Fascism is peculiar to any one country. The inevitability of the growth of some form of Fascism is inherent in the whole economic and political situation of the world to-day. The rise of Fascism in each and every country in the world is the quite inescapable consequence of the faltering of the workers' parties before the supreme task with which history now confronts them.

As we have seen, the rapidity of the advance of modern technique makes it not only possible, but necessary, to realize plenty, leisure and peace for the mass of the human race. Unless this is done, we shall suffer—indeed we have begun this ten years past to suffer—not merely our familiar ills but far worse ones. But one cardinal condition must be fulfilled before our modern machines

will give us blessings instead of plagues, and that is the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production. For the whole economic, political and social system which is based on the private ownership of the factories, mines and fields, is flatly incompatible with our modern technique of production. For just as long as we maintain a private ownership cum profits-prices economy, and a world system of independent, sovereign States and Empires, all our attempts to use our modern machines will continue to result only in worse unemployment, mass starvation, unparalleled economic dislocation and finally war.

It is, therefore, the immediate mission of the Labour movements of the world to abolish the private ownership of the means of production. And it is true that these movements have become, during the last fifty years, increasingly conscious of this fact. More and more they have come under the leadership of men who talked of Socialism—of the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production—as the goal to be achieved. Nowhere, however, except in Russia, have these movements seriously attempted the actual work of expropriation. Although in some countries, as in Germany in 1918, these movements have held unquestioned power, they have always halted



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and retreated rather than put their hands to the critical task. In history, however, you cannot halt. No sooner was it seen that the Labour movements were making no real struggle for the expropriation of the Capitalists than their decline began. For the economic situation inevitably drifted from bad to worse. The clash between modern machinery and the existing social system became more and more pronounced. We have traced how the economic disorganization produced by that clash destroyed the basis of those gradual reforms and improvements which the Labour movements attempted to make.

To-day, in one country after another, the whole situation *demands decision*. Ever more violently, ever more imperatively, it *demands decision*. For, so long as there is no decision, so long, that is, as we take neither the Socialist path to the abolition of our present social system, nor the Fascist path to the destruction in war of our modern machine production, the situation for every one of us will become ever more intolerable. Economic chaos, social disorder, international tension, will grow and grow. One by one, men and women will lose their jobs. The industrial workers will fall into destitution and hopeless unemployment. The middle classes will fall, family by

family, into the level of the workers. Uncertainty, insecurity, helplessness, hopelessness will make a nightmare of life. The hour will call ever more imperiously for decision. If those parties which maintain their hold over the majority of the workers show themselves impotent to get decision by ending private ownership, then men must turn to the only alternative—to the Fascist parties.

For these parties, these Fascists, though they can only lead to disaster, will lead. The argument of these pages is that the Fascists will, if we let them, kill and torture and ravage everyone and everything which threaten private ownership ; they will seek to extirpate internationalism, Socialism, Communism, popular education, culture and lastly, civilization itself, as they perceive that each of these things is incompatible with private ownership. It is true that they will only lead mankind to the far worse chaos, uncertainty and agony of modern war. But if the masses are given no possibility of hope by their own leaders, even war may come to seem preferable to the long, slow, living death of unemployment. The masses will feel in their own bodies, by their intolerable present sufferings, the absolute need of some decision. The Fascists will come to them with many plausible promises : above all, they will

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offer to change things. There will never be the slightest danger of the workers coming under Fascist influence if their own leaders are showing them in words and deeds the true road of escape—are leading them to the expropriation of the capitalists. If, however, the masses have been sufficiently deluded, bilked and betrayed, they can be blinded to the inevitable consequences of Fascism and headed in decisive numbers along the road to destruction.

This is the situation which, if ever and when ever it occurs, inevitably gives rise to a Fascist movement. Beside this fundamental explanation of the rise of Fascism all the special circumstances which accompany, and colour, the rise of each particular Fascist movement are wholly incidental.

. . . . .

Can we possibly deny the gradual appearance in Britain of all the elements in the situation which we have just described? Is it not perfectly obvious that all the reasons given by Mr. Morrison, Mr. Cole and their colleagues for the impossibility of Fascism in Britain are merely reasons why Fascism cannot *yet* succeed in Britain? It is quite true that the situation in Britain is by no means so developed as it is elsewhere. The effects of the economic crisis

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are not yet sufficiently widespread or profound to force a decision here and now. The unequalled reserve wealth of Britain still enables her to blunt the edge of the social conflict to a certain degree. But does anyone in their senses suppose that Britain is in fact a fairy-land, set apart from the rest of humanity, wholly and definitely different, in whose favour the laws of science and logic have been suspended so that like causes will not produce like effects? Alas! there is every evidence that this is precisely what very many of us do in our hearts suppose. And our disenchantment will be bitter indeed.

For Britain is not basically different from the rest of the world. She is only a little behind-hand. The same processes are at work with us that we can see in their fruition in Europe. The Labour movement has travelled perhaps a little more than half of the circle which has been described by, for example, the German Social Democrats. Fascism is in Britain still in the embryonic stage of German Fascism in about 1923. It has had its initial failure—a failure incomparably less ludicrous than was the initial failure of Hitler as a matter of fact—and is awaiting the development of the economic and political situation.

The economic crisis, although still mild

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compared to that which exists in Central Europe, is beginning to be seen, by both the workers and the capitalists, to be incurable by present methods. The Labour party has clearly forfeited the enthusiasm, although not the stubborn support, of the mass of the British workers. The Independent Labour party, an historical and organic part of the British Labour movement, has for the first time in its history split off from the Labour party and clearly contains many workers who are groping their way towards a revolutionary policy. The most advanced workers are turning, under the leadership of the Communist party, towards conscious, revolutionary action. In general, the British workers have begun to doubt the usefulness of that whole policy of progressive gradualism which they have followed for three generations. But they are only beginning to feel their way towards the revolutionary alternative.

Thus the British capitalists' ownership of the factories, fields and mines is threatened, not yet so much by a conscious and clear-sighted revolutionary movement of the British workers, as by the spontaneously growing disorder of the British economic and social system. There is a pronounced "lag" between the development of the economic situation and our

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consciousness of that development. The British workers are still to a large extent dominated by the illusion of the possibility of progress under Capitalism. Yet that possibility has long disappeared, and definite decline has set in.

This is the classic breeding-ground of Fascism. The rise of a Fascist movement, of a movement, that is, for the preservation by violence of the private ownership of the means of production, is an historical certainty in the Britain of to-day. There is not the slightest doubt that the British capitalists, just so soon as they are thoroughly alarmed, will organize all their forces—their physical forces—in order to attack by violence and terror everything which threatens their position. To suppose anything else is to fall a victim to the most pitiful illusions.

What cannot be foreseen is the exact form which the Fascist movement, viz. the movement for the maintenance of Capitalism by violence, will take in Britain. It is possible that the British capitalists will not organize a mass demagogic movement on the lines of the Italians and the Nazis. It may be that they will prefer to rely on their present resources of violence, suitably reorganized no doubt, rather than adopt the more difficult policy of recruiting a private army. The proposals of Lord Trenchard (already enacted by the National

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Government) for militarizing the police, and reserving the more important positions of command for men drawn from the governing class, are a most striking step in this direction.

It would be fully consonant with the traditions of our governing class if British Fascism appeared in an almost unrecognizable form. It certainly behoves the British workers to be on the look-out for an insidious development of Fascism on these lines. May not the Territorials, for example, be used as the nucleus of the Fascist army? It may well be that the workers, if they are unprepared, will have their attention concentrated upon the Mosley Fascists, or some similar body, while the real weapon for the destruction of their organizations is being quietly forged by a "national" Government. On the other hand, the advantages for the capitalists of a special demagogic party and army, which can attempt to canalize mass discontent along the Fascist path, are very great. (Even if the British ruling class decides to create such a movement, it may be that Mosley has not found the correct formula for Britain.)

It is impossible to tell in advance what form of Fascism will be adopted in Britain. Indeed, these are questions which the British capitalists must solve for themselves. What is imperative

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for the British workers to realize is that in some form or another they will have launched against them a terroristic and violent attack. Their whole fate depends upon them taking in time the steps necessary for their self-preservation.



## CHAPTER X

### THE POLICY OF THE LESSER EVIL (1)

THE FASCIST attempt—the attempt, that is, of the capitalists to preserve their system by violence—is bound to be made in Britain as elsewhere. How can this counter-attack of Capitalism, this counter-revolution, be defeated?

The first thing to do is to study the history of the rise of German Fascism, and the methods used by the German working class in their struggle against it. For the Social Democratic party of Germany, which, to the very end of its existence, retained the leadership of the decisive majority of the German working class, adopted one perfectly consistent policy for dealing with the menace, first of reaction in general, and later of Fascism in particular.

In the year 1918, at the moment of the defeat of the German Imperial Army, the German workers rose in revolt and established their power throughout Germany. As this fact is even now not fully realized outside Germany, it will be well to quote the estimate of one of the

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most important German Social Democratic leaders, Karl Kautsky. Of the situation as it existed in that year, Kautsky writes as follows :

“ In November 1918 the Revolution was the work of proletarian elements alone. The proletariat won so all-powerful a position that the bourgeois elements, to begin with, did not dare to attempt any resistance.”—Preface to the third edition of *The Proletarian Revolution*, 1931.

If Kautsky's evidence is considered inconclusive, here is how Mr. Mowrer, an American Liberal, who would like to see a Liberal Capitalist Germany, describes what happened in 1918. When, in November 1918, the German Army broke, he writes :

“ and the component parts recovered their human individuality, the power slipped from the nerveless hands of the generals.

“ Fritz Ebert, the sadler President, Philipp Scheidemann, the tailor, Gustav Noske, the carpenter, snatched it from the street where the Communists were about to seize it—and handed it back to the astonished generals. Through patriotism. Through fear of Communism. Through abhorrence of disorder. Through the deference obviously

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owed by the 'lower orders' to their social superiors. Ebert knew his place."—*Germany Puts the Clock Back*.

It will be noted that Mr. Mowrer fully substantiates Kautsky's view that the whole power had fallen from the hands of the ruling class, and that the workers had the power.

The Social Democrats, it must be remembered, formed, as the Commissars of the Berlin Soldiers' and Workers' Council, an exclusively Socialist Government both in Germany as a whole and in Prussia. The realities of power were admittedly in their hands. The Prussian armed police were under their command, and were composed of men who were undoubtedly loyal to the revolution. Large sections of the workers were themselves armed, since they had carried away their rifles with them from the army. In industry, workers' councils were everywhere set up. A nation-wide system of Soviets was rapidly establishing itself.

As yet, however, the factories, fields and mines had not been taken from the German capitalists and landowners. And until that was done the capitalists remained powerful and had to be reckoned with. Hence the German Social Democratic Ministers had this choice before them. They could either lead

the German workers to the task of expropriating the German capitalists, after which a planned Socialist system of production could have been organized, or they could restrain the German workers from attacking the fundamental property rights of the German capitalists, and establish a Capitalist Republic. If they chose this latter course, it was clearly necessary for them both to establish an alliance with at any rate some sections of the German capitalists, and to restrain, if necessary by violence, any sections of the German workers who should attempt to complete the revolution by taking over the means of production.

As everyone knows, the German Social Democrats chose the second course. Herr Noske, their Minister of the Interior, shot down, with great efficiency, those workers who refused to follow the advice of their leaders and who attempted to start taking over the factories. Under Herr Noske's surveyance, corps of officers were allowed and encouraged to disarm those workers who had arms, and to "reorganize" units of the armed forces which were sympathetic to the workers' revolution.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The news has just been received in Britain that this gentleman, Herr Noske, has written to the Fascist Government begging that his pension should still be paid. Never in history has there been a juster claim.

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A coalition was formed with that section of the German capitalists who supported the Catholic Centre party, and a Democratic, Republican, Capitalist Constitution was established at Weimar.

\* The important thing, however, for us to notice is the argument by which the Social Democratic leaders persuaded—and, let us admit at once, successfully persuaded—the majority of the German workers to accept this policy. This was the first statement of that policy which the German Social Democrats ever afterwards pursued, and which will go down to history as “the policy of the lesser evil.”

“If you follow the lead of the German revolutionaries, of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, and of the nascent German Communist party,” said the Social Democratic leaders, “you will be faced with a desperate struggle. You will have to fight the German capitalists, Junkers and generals. Maybe you think that these people are on the run. That is true, but behind them stand the French, British and American capitalists, and they will intervene against a workers’ Germany. Then you will have to stand both a foreign intervention and a civil war.

Do not take this hazardous road. We can

show you a much better way. Moderate your demands for the moment. Make a temporary sacrificē of your Socialist aims, in order to secure, without the risks and hardships of struggle, your broadly liberal and democratic aims. Do not attempt to dispossess the capitalists : do not attempt to root out the Feudalists and Junkers from their official posts, and, in return for your moderation, these classes will be only too glad to agree without a struggle to the establishment of the freest, most democratic and republican constitution in the world. Then, when that is once secured, you German workers will be able gradually, and under this new and perfectly democratic constitution, to move forward again to the realization of your Socialist ideals. Only then you will be able to do so in a peaceful, orderly, constitutional and safe manner.

“ Surely you will agree with us that this is a better way than the hard and hazardous road along which Liebnecht and Luxemburg are asking you to struggle? No doubt our way requires patience and discipline. It requires that you should make some sacrifices now ; that you should temporarily endure your present hard lot ; that you should not use your present power to procure for yourselves, as you might, the right to the best in the land.

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These are evils, but surely you will agree that they are *lesser evils* than those involved in the struggle to overthrow German Capitalism? These are sacrifices, but only temporary ones, sacrifices which are well worth making in order to induce the capitalists and Junkers to agree to allow us to set up without resistance our splendid free, democratic, republican constitution. The times are difficult. We are faced with a choice of evils. Let us, like sensible men, choose the lesser evil. Let us be patient, disciplined, and in time all our present sacrifices will be rewarded."

Could there be a better platform case? Ebert, Scheidemann, Noske and the other Social Democratic leaders had their way. They persuaded all the more backward, bewildered, unawakened German workers to follow their lead : and, as for the others, the bolder, undaunted workers, who followed the revolutionary leaders, who wished to establish Socialism there and then—well, as for them, said the Social Democratic Ministers, it might not be pleasant but they had to be shot. And shot they were by the police and troops under Herr Noske's orders.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Is not this the classical illustration of the fact that in a situation of social crisis the "moderate," Social Democratic or Labour party leaders can no more avoid the use of violence than can the revolutionaries? The difference between the policy of the Social Democrats

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The Social Democrats had their way. They made their bargain with the capitalists and the Junkers. In return, for Noske's police protection for their property, these gentlemen allowed "the freest and most democratic republic in the world," as the Social Democrats called it, to be established at Weimar. The workers were assured that from now on they had only to exercise their newly won rights and they could establish Socialism by gradual, peaceful, painless and constitutional means. For those "democratic rights" which the workers had been told were the prerequisite of Socialism had been won. The Weimar Constitution was the culmination of formal democracy. An elaborate system of proportional representation assured the workers, they were told, that their wishes would be exactly expressed in Parliament. Trade Union organization, freedom of speech and publication, the right of assembly, the abolition of titles and caste privileges, were all secured. Now then, surely, was the time to go forward to Socialism.

As a matter of fact, the workers did signify their desire to press on toward Socialism. They

and the revolutionaries is not that the one leads to peaceful and constitutional evolution and the other to violence: the true difference is that the Social Democratic policy leads to violence used against the workers on behalf of the capitalists and the revolutionary policy leads to violence used against the capitalists on behalf of the workers.



voted the Social Democratic party into a predominant position. It became the largest party in Germany. It held the key position of the Prussian Government in its absolute and undisputed control. Social Democracy dominated the early years of the Weimar Republic.

The workers were expectant and waiting. And yet nothing happened. Somehow the times remained unpropitious. Somehow or other the "rights" secured by the Weimar Constitution did not seem to make it possible to satisfy even the workers' simpler desires for better wages, shorter hours, more social services, let alone for Socialism. For German Capitalism passed from crisis to crisis. And so long as the capitalists were in possession of German industry—and *that was the condition of the Weimar compromise*—the ability of the Social Democrats to give something to their supporters depended on the prosperity of German Capitalism. In the early years of the Republic, German Capitalism had nothing to give anybody. These were the inflation years. Instead of an advance towards Socialism, a mass destitution fell upon the German people. By the autumn of 1923 the living conditions of the German workers had become intolerable. And somehow the fact, which they were assured was so glorious, that

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they were now living under "the freest and most democratic Constitution in the world," did not quite compensate them for having very little to eat.

The political situation soon began to alter. Those "bourgeois elements" of Kautsky's, which in the beginning had not dared to offer any resistance, began to stir. The elections began to show a decline in the strength of the Social Democrats. The generals, the capitalists, the Junkers suddenly began to find that they were not so unpopular as they had supposed. The Conservative parties, the Catholic Centre, the German People's party, began to gain votes. Also, although no one paid much attention to it at the time, there had been an attempted monarchist counter-revolution in Munich, in which a mad fellow called Hitler had been involved. By 1923, the Social Democrats were clearly faced with the menace of reaction, and they had witnessed, though they did not know it, the birth of Fascism.

What were they to do? In the autumn of 1923 the leaders of the German working class had again, as in 1918, the choice of two policies before them. Their first alternative was to repudiate their marriage of convenience with German capital, pass to the attack, and make a supreme attempt to establish Socialism in

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Germany by taking over the means of production. And there is no doubt that in the autumn of 1923 the German working class was desperate, and ready for this attempt. (At the Congress of the Workers' Councils, a Communist resolution calling for immediate revolutionary action received, in spite of the furious opposition of all the official leaders, only just short of half of the votes cast.) Many observers believe that even if the German Communists had by themselves initiated revolutionary action at this time, they would have been successful. (For it must be remembered that the stability of German Capitalism had been shaken to its foundations by the inflation of the currency to the ultimate point of extinction ; that the lower middle class was ruined, ready for desperate measures, and not yet Fascist.) In any case, there can be no doubt that if the German Social Democrats had themselves led what would in that case have been a united working class to the seizure of power, success would have been assured. (The many of the key positions of Governmental power, including command of important sections of the armed forces, were after all still in the Social Democrats' hands.)

The Social Democratic leaders, however, repudiated such a policy with horror. "What madness it would be," they told the workers,

“ to try to take power now. If we judged it unwise to expropriate the capitalists and establish Socialism in 1918, when the workers were all-powerful, and reaction was prostrate, how much more unwise would it be to make such an attempt now, when the reaction is admittedly growing in strength ; when the workers’ enthusiasm for the Republic has noticeably declined. No, the policy of the lesser evil has been adopted and it is necessary to carry it through. The present regrettable situation is no time for talk of rash attempts to take over all power for the workers. On the contrary, it is necessary to retreat, temporarily of course, to suffer some further sacrifices in order to ensure the preservation of all that had been gained by the establishment of a democratic republic.

“ For this sacred purpose, and as the one way to thwart the designs of the reactionaries, who wish to destroy Democracy, Parliamentary Government and the freedom of the Trade Unions, we must form a broad united front of all genuine Democrats and Liberals. The German workers should drop, for the moment, too much talk of Socialism. Let them, at any rate, put their main emphasis upon their broad liberal and democratic aims. Thus many interests, not usually friendly to the workers, will be drawn into alliance with us. Powerful

allies—the Roman Catholic Centre, for example, and the interests which it represents, the Liberals, the German People's party, representing the more progressive industrialists—can thus all be recruited for the fight against reaction. Certain sacrifices of immediate benefits will no doubt be necessary for this purpose. But surely you will agree that such sacrifices are abundantly worth while? For they will enable us to ward off the growing menace of reaction by forming a broad united front of all liberal and democratic elements. Thus Democracy, Parliamentary Government, the right of association, will be saved. Everything else is madness."

Once again the Social Democratic leaders had their way. The German workers retreated. There was no general revolutionary movement. At Hamburg, and in some isolated places, the workers rose. But again they were shot down, and if on this occasion they did not have the maddening consciousness of being shot by order of a Social Democratic Minister of the Interior, yet the bullets came from a Government which was kept in office by the votes of the Social Democrats in the Reichstag.

For by this time the workers' enthusiasm for the somehow somewhat abstract gains of living in a Capitalist Republic as against a

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Capitalist Monarchy had so far diminished that the Social Democrats were no longer in a completely dominating parliamentary position. So they entered—as, on the whole, junior partners—Coalition Governments formed by the democratic parties of the Centre and of the Right Centre. Or, later on, they supported—“tolerated,” as the phrase went, by steadily voting for them in Parliament, Governments exclusively formed by such parties.

However, this new application of the policy of the lesser evil did undoubtedly for a time seem to have succeeded in its main purpose. It did appear to have warded off the threat of reaction and to have saved the Democratic Constitution. For a time, as it happened, the economic situation began to improve, and the Social Democrats were not forced to call upon the German workers to undergo any major new deprivation. This period, from 1924 to 1929, from the French withdrawal from the Ruhr to the great slump, was the heyday of the policy of the lesser evil. The Social Democrats were not able in the Reich, it is true, to govern themselves. (They retained, however, their control of the Government of Prussia.) But they maintained in office Governments of the Centre or the German People's party, led by such men as Stresemann and Brüning.

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So long as they accepted such conditions they were not, of course, in a position even to think of advancing a single inch towards Socialism. They supported by their votes in Parliament the payment of reparations, the building of new battleships, and the payment of vast subsidies to the more and more monopolistic German capitalists. Moreover, they "tolerated" the steady revival, under Government encouragement, of every reactionary element in the life of Germany. The capitalists, Feudal Junkers, and the unchanging militarists, everywhere began to creep into positions of greater and greater influence and importance.

All this did nothing to raise the enthusiasm of the German workers, either for the Social Democrats or for their creation, the democratic republic. All the same, and certainly by comparison with what was to come, this period represented the triumph of the policy of the lesser evil. The situation was considered by the Social Democratic leaders to be by no means unsatisfactory. Their speeches showed a mounting self-complacency.

And then came the slump. It came for the Social Democrats with dreadful unexpectedness. For the German Social Democratic leaders, also, had a firm faith in the stability and permanence of Capitalism. It came sooner

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in Germany than anywhere else, and it went deeper. Its onset found the Social Democrats either supporting or "tolerating" various types of coalition parliamentary governments. When the slump came, these Governments had necessarily to take the usual steps which all capitalist Governments must take in times of slump. They had to "cut." They had to cut down their expenditure of all sorts. They had to cut their grants to local authorities ; they had to cut social services ; they had to cut unemployment benefit ; and above all, of course, they had to use the elaborate German system of Government arbitration to cut wages.

Now, at first sight, one might suppose that all this would bring grist to the mill of a Socialist party such as the Social Democrats. Surely all these cuts must have created just that deep discontent which turns the workers towards Socialism ? But the Social Democrats were either members of, or were the main supporters of, the very Governments which were carrying out these cuts. How, then, could they rally the workers against the cuts ? For the third time, in 1930, as in 1918 and 1923, a crisis in German Capitalism presented the Social Democrats with the necessity of choosing either one of two policies. Either they had to continue to support the Centre democratic governments, which



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were carrying out the cuts, and somehow explain their position to the German workers, or they had to go into opposition, overthrow these Governments, and fight for the power to overthrow German Capitalism itself. For it was clear that if the Social Democrats withdrew their support of the existing Centre Governments, parliamentary democratic government would become impossible. The Government would at once pass into the hands of the extreme Right, and all the democratic rights of the Republic would be jeopardized.

On this occasion, the German Social Democrats had little hesitation. They were quite convinced of the necessity of carrying on the policy of the lesser evil. "It is unthinkable," they said, "at such a moment, when the situation is as bad as it can be, that we should alienate all the steady middle-class elements of the country by making Parliamentary Government impossible. We shall not dream of going into an opposition which must soon inevitably become a revolutionary opposition. For, if the reaction had begun to grow in 1923, it is far more formidable now. Besides, it has taken on a new and alarming form. Fascism has appeared. And we must sacrifice almost anything to keep the Fascists at bay."

## CHAPTER XI

### THE POLICY OF THE LESSER EVIL (2)

FASCISM had appeared. At the elections of September 1930, the German Fascists leapt on to the stage of national politics. The Nazis polled six million votes and elected a hundred Deputies. What was more, it became clear that they had already recruited a formidable private army of storm troops, the avowed purpose of which was to overthrow the Democratic Republic.

The rise of this strange Fascist party seemed unaccountable to the Social Democrats. But it need hardly puzzle anyone else. For to what political refuge were the ruined, disinherited men and women of Germany to go? They could not go, as they would naturally have gone, to the Socialists. For the Social Democratic party was the main bulwark of the republican Capitalist regime under which they had been ruined. The Social Democrats, and everybody knew it by this time, were the reverse of a revolutionary party. They were,

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in the exact sense of the term, the Conservative party of Germany ; for their paramount object had become to conserve the existing *status quo*—namely, the democratic Capitalist republic. Hence, they were hated by all who had learnt to hate the Capitalist republic, because they had been ruined by it. Where could all those who had lost jobs, who had lost hope, find a political refuge ? Those who for various reasons did not go to the Communists inevitably went to the Fascists, who at any rate raised that one slogan of hope, “ something has to happen.”

In any event, the Fascist party had suddenly appeared. “ So how can anyone,” said the Social Democrats, “ but a mad Communist dream in such conditions of going out into opposition to the democratic Centre Government of such a good, steady man as Herr Brüning ? Is it not obvious that in face of this new and fearful menace the correct policy for the German workers is to support almost any Constitutional Government for the sake of preserving democracy, parliamentary government and the freedom of the Trade Unions ? ”

And once again the Social Democrats had their way. They “ tolerated ” everything and anything for the sake of preserving the democratic republic. In the spring of 1932, for example, the time for the German Presidential

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Election fell due. At the previous election, Field Marshal von Hindenburg had been elected by the united reactionary parties defeating a Social Democratic candidate. At this election, a new candidate appeared in the field—Hitler, the leader of the Fascists. What should the Social Democrats do? If they placed their own candidate in the field, they split the anti-Fascist vote. Hitler might be elected. At all costs they must avoid this. So they decided to support Hindenburg. For Hindenburg was “a lesser evil” than Hitler. No Social Democratic candidate was nominated. Sufficient German workers obeyed their leaders to elect Hindenburg. The Social Democrats were elated. The Fascists had been foiled again. It had proved possible, the Social Democrats felt, by their wise, moderate and prudent policy, to recruit even Field Marshals as their allies against Fascism.

More immediate sacrifices than electing Hindenburg as President were, however, required of the German workers in order to carry out the “wise and prudent” policy of “the lesser evil.” For two and a half fateful years, the great Social Democratic party of Germany showed an absolute fidelity to those Capitalist allies with the help of which alone, it felt sure, Fascism and reaction in general could be

defeated. In the final eighteen months of German Parliamentary Government (from the beginning of 1931 to the summer of 1932), for the sake of these allies, it steadily supported the Bruening Government of the Catholic Centre party, in putting through wage reductions, reductions in social services, cuts in unemployment benefit, on a scale hitherto undreamt of in the world.

In those eighteen months of the Bruening Government, which depended absolutely on Social Democratic support, the average weekly wage of the German industrial workers fell from 42s. 2d. to 22s. 6d. a week. Worse, unemployment benefit was reduced to an average of about 9s. 3d. a week. And during the whole of this period unemployment was rising, till at the end of it there were five and a half million registered unemployed alone. (At the same time, the Government was kind enough to issue an official estimate of £2 a week as the minimum cost of living for a workers' family with two children.)

These reductions were principally effected by the notorious five "Hunger Decrees," as they came to be known to the German workers, issued by the Bruening Government. For ordinary parliamentary procedure had been abandoned. While it was essential, the Social

Democrats assured the workers, to support the Government because it was democratic and constitutional, Herr Bruening actually governed as a dictator. He issued decrees, signed by the President of the Republic, Field Marshal von Hindenburg (who had been elected by Social Democratic votes), and only called Parliament together occasionally, in order to give the Social Democrats the opportunity to ratify his decrees, and so take on the full responsibility for all the cuts which he had imposed upon the workers. In addition to these cuts, the Bruening Government imposed extraordinarily heavy new taxation. An Occupation Tax, a Crisis Tax, a Head Tax, a Salt Tax, a Municipal Tax and a Turnover Tax were decreed. More serious still, however, were the unparalleled new duties which were placed upon the importation of foodstuffs. For example, these duties resulted (and still result) in the price of bread being between two and three times as high as it was and is in Britain.

How *can* it be that the leaders of the majority of the German working class steadily supported such a Government? *Voerwarts*, which was the great official journal of the Social Democratic party, answered this question clearly. On May 30th, 1932, *Voerwarts* wrote that the Bruening Government

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“was indispensably necessary to prevent political and economic chaos. This being the situation, the Social Democratic party adopted a policy of toleration with the express intention of making a Fascist seizure of power impossible and so prevent the unemployed from being sacrificed by a Fascist regime in the steadily worsening crisis.”

*The application of the policy of the lesser evil had begun in earnest. In order to ward off Fascism, to preserve the principle of democracy, and, avowedly, to preserve the existing Capitalist economic system (“to prevent political and economic chaos”), the Social Democrats had month after month supported a Government which had in practice become a dictatorship. In order to preserve Parliamentary Government, the Social Democrats had supported a Government which summoned Parliament once every few months, on condition that it approved of everything that the Government had done. In order to preserve the freedom of the Trade Unions to organize the workers, the Social Democrats supported the reduction of the workers’ wages to the level of unorganized labourers. In order to prevent the unemployed “being sacrificed by a Fascist regime,” the Social Democrats supported the reduction of unemployment benefit to 9s. 3d. a week.*

As yet, however, the policy of the lesser evil had by no means reached its logical conclusion.

In May 1932, the economic crisis was still deepening. The Social Democrats' fidelity to the Bruening Government had not weakened. But curiously enough their own presidential candidate, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, took a different view. He had come to the conclusion that something had to be done. And what he did was quite simply to give Herr Bruening the sack, caring not at all that Herr Bruening still enjoyed the confidence of the Social Democrats in Parliament, and to place in power Herr von Papen, who was just one of those reactionaries whom the Social Democrats had sacrificed so much to keep out.

But even Herr von Papen was not, the Social Democrats concluded, the *greatest* evil. Hitler was the greatest evil. And it would be well worth while to endure some further sacrifices in order to preserve the lesser evil (as compared to Hitler) of von Papen. Nor did they have to wait long before finding out what these further sacrifices would be.

It must be remembered that right up to this time (July 1932) the Social Democrats were still in positions of great power. Above all they controlled the Government of Prussia, which ruled over two-thirds of Germany, and controlled sixty-seven thousand fully armed police. And the sacrifice which they had to



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endure for the sake of "tolerating" the lesser evil of von Papen as against the greater evil of Hitler was precisely the control of Prussia and the Prussian police. For one of von Papen's first acts, in defiance of that Constitution which the Social Democrats had already sacrificed so much to preserve, was curtly to dismiss the Social Democratic Government of Prussia.

Let us follow Mr. Mowrer's account of how the Social Democratic leaders made this sacrifice upon the altar of the now threadbare Constitution. On July 20th, 1932, von Papen summoned the Prussian Cabinet Ministers to his office and briefly informed them that they were dismissed. Carl Severing, the Social Democrat Minister of the Interior, replied (we quote from Mr. Mowrer) as follows :

“ ‘ I consider your action a breach of the law and of the Constitution. I shall yield only to violence. These days are important for world history, Herr Reichs-Chancellor, and a Socialist Minister would be violating his duty if he left his office with the stain of desertion upon him ! ’

“ ‘ Oh,’ exclaimed the Chancellor, ‘ if you are looking for a chance to save your face, Herr Severing, no doubt we can come to an

agreement about the amount of violence to be employed.' ”

This ended the interview.

“ Franz von Papen rang the bell. Ten minutes later, according to plans approved by Hindenburg and carefully prepared by Kurt von Schleicher, Minister of the Defence, the City of Berlin and the Province of Brandenburg had been placed under Military Law. A contest of power was imminent between Carl Severing, who theoretically disposed of the Prussian Police Force, and Lieutenant General Gerd von Rundstedt, commander of the Third Military District, who actually controlled a division of regular troops. The situation was set for civil war.

“ Carl Severing returned to his office in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, Unter den Linden. His course, too, had been planned in advance. He did nothing.”

In the end, Severing, Braun (the Socialist Prime Minister of Prussia) and Greszinsky, the commander of the sixty-seven thousand armed police, allowed themselves to be kicked out of their offices by Captain Grase of the Reichswehr and fifteen infantrymen.

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This is Mr. Mowrer's comment : " They had yielded to a mere threat—as the jeering Communists had always said they would." And this is Mr. Mowrer's estimate of the forces at their command :

• " As Prussian Minister of the Interior, Carl Severing was the reorganizer and ultimate commander of the Prussian police, whose sixty-seven thousand men made it, after the Regular Army of one hundred thousand, the largest armed force in Germany. As a champion of the Republic, he entirely disposed of the Republican private organization, the Reichsbanner, with its powerful auxiliaries, the Socialist Sporting Organizations and the industrial sabotage groups, the Hammer Squads. As Labour leader, he had decisive influence over the larger Trade Unions, the Allgemeine Gewerkschaftsbund. As a Social Democrat official, he still commanded the loyalty of about eight million voters whose violent reaction was almost certain temporarily to be seconded by the five million Communists. All over Germany, Socialists who read the news of the ignominious dismissal of Braun and Severing waited for the inevitable answer—the General Strike—and waited in vain.

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“The guardians of the democratic Republic allowed themselves to be swept from office without a blow, like so many hired servants.”

Mr. Mowrer is, we repeat, an American liberal, with no particular sympathy for the cause of the workers' revolution. If, however, his testimony is doubted, here is the comment of the *Manchester Guardian* on the day after von Papen dismissed the Social Democratic Prussian Government :

“The great difficulty of the Socialists and Trade Union Leaders is to maintain the discipline of the rank and file, as the bitterness and fury of the German working class have reached boiling point” (July 21st, 1932).

On that day (July 20th, 1932) the German Social Democratic leaders sealed their fate. How can we possibly explain their repeated surrenders? We have described the case which they presented to the workers, first in 1918, for not using their power to dispossess the capitalists, second for propping up instead of pushing down the reeling structure of German Capitalism in 1923, and lastly for suffering their own political ruin rather than

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endanger the ever-weakening position of German Capitalism in 1930-32.

They did all this, they said, in order to obtain, and then to preserve, the democratic constitution. Can we, however, as we look back on this whole extraordinary story, accept this explanation? Do not the deeds of the Social Democratic leaders speak far more eloquently than their words? Is it not clear that the only possible explanation for their otherwise incomprehensible policy is that what they feared and dreaded most of all was precisely the overthrow of German Capitalism and the establishment of the workers' power?

For at least twice, in 1918 and again in 1923, they unquestionably had it in their power to expropriate the capitalists and to establish a Socialist economy in Germany, thus carrying through the revolution. The only conceivable explanation for the fact that they preferred even their own political extinction, is surely proof that they were in the last resort devoted supporters of Capitalism. Behind and beyond all their hierarchies of "evils," one greater than the other, beyond Bruening, beyond Hindenburg, beyond Papen, beyond Schleicher, beyond Hugenburg, beyond Hitler, lay the greatest evil of all—the establishment of the workers' power. And it was to avoid the revolution at

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any and every cost, at the cost of their own political extermination if need be, that the German Social Democratic leaders played out their parts to the bitter end.

. . . . .

The Prussian evictions do not, however, by any means end the history of the slow suicide of the Social Democrats upon the altar of German Capitalism. The policy of the lesser evil was only entering its final phase. During the autumn of 1932, indeed, it seemed to the Social Democrats that their gigantic sacrifices had not been in vain. They had supported Bruening in the carrying through of a programme of working-class suppression, and working-class starvation, which will long remain a model for Capitalist Governments. They had forborne even to place a Presidential candidate in the field and had thrown their whole vast electoral machine behind the candidature of Field Marshal von Hindenburg. They had restrained the Trade Unions from engaging in any determined struggle on behalf of their members. They had "tolerated" the reduction of unemployment benefit to 9s. 3d. a week. They had "tolerated" not only Bruening but the overthrow of Bruening. They had "tolerated" their own eviction

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from their last great stronghold of power—the Government of Prussia. They had done and suffered all this.

They had done this and suffered this, they said, to keep Hitler out and so to save the Republic. And, in the autumn of 1932, they seemed to themselves to have succeeded. By their extreme conservatism, they had undoubtedly built up what seemed to be a broad national front against Fascism. They appeared to have succeeded in making even Hindenburg, Papen, and Hugenburg, the great ultra-reactionary capitalist, line up with the workers against the Fascists.

At the polls, this strange coalition of forces was definitely successful in preventing Hitler from ever obtaining a majority. All through 1932, at election after election, the Fascists strove desperately and in vain to get Parliamentary power. It was true that the "sacrifices" which the Social Democrats had made, their undeniable responsibility for the Bruening cuts, for the regime of semi-starvation for a great section of the population which the Republic had become, had thrown million after million of the electors into the arms of Hitler. But the alliances which those sacrifices had secured did appear to be just adequate to prevent his accession to power. Moreover, as

this became apparent, the Social Democrats, to their immense satisfaction, began to observe the first signs of disintegration in the Fascist ranks. The Hitler party began for the first time to lose ground at the elections. The policy of the lesser evil seemed to its authors to be about to be justified.

And then there occurred what, inevitably, and in the very nature of things, had to occur. The arrest and the beginnings of disintegration in the German Fascist movement were observed not only by the Social Democrats but by their allies, the political representatives of the capitalists and the Junkers.

At this moment a question of fearful urgency came into the minds of the German ruling class. *If the Fascist movement was to disintegrate, what would then be left to protect the capitalists' ownership of their factories, mines and fields?* Papen looked at Schleicher, and Hugenburg looked at Papen. They saw only blankness and dismay in each other's eyes. If the eyes of the senile Hindenburg could still see anything, they could see this—that if the Fascist movement was allowed to disintegrate, nothing, literally nothing, stood between them and the workers' revolution. For in spite of everything the German revolutionary movement was gaining ground. The Communists gained at almost



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every election. The temper of every section of the working population was becoming more and more desperate. What, in face of this situation, became of the German capitalists' objections to giving power to Fascism? From the beginning they had in fact owned and controlled the German Fascist movement. But they had undoubtedly preferred to keep control of the Government for themselves, and to let the Fascists do the dirty work in the streets for them.

But such considerations became merely trivial when it was apparent that if the Fascists were not given power, the Fascist movement would disintegrate and the capitalists would lose their last basis of mass support. In one day, January 30th, 1933, all those glittering allies which the Social Democrats had bought at the price of such immense sacrifices on the part of the German workers, all the German capitalists, Junkers, and their henchmen, crossed over to the Fascist camp.

Hitler was given power by Hindenburg. Such was the perfect symbol of the duping of the Social Democrats. Hindenburg, who had been put into his supreme office by the massed votes of the German workers, following blindly their blind leaders; Hindenburg, who had been made President by the Social Democrats

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simply and solely in order to keep out Hitler, nine months later quietly sent for Hitler and made him Dictator of Germany.

The Fascists were given power *precisely because* they were beginning to show signs of disintegration. It was necessary to give Hitler power in the State just because he was losing power with the masses. The Fascists were given power because they were the last possible basis of mass support for German Capitalism; and this basis the German capitalists could not at any price allow to disintegrate.

How different was the conduct of the German capitalists in January 1933 to what the conduct of the Social Democrats had been in 1918, 1923 and 1932. When events forced the Social Democrats to choose between preserving the forms of the Constitution and beginning a struggle to obtain power for their class, they repeatedly chose to abide by the forms of the Constitution. They three times sacrificed the German working class upon the altar of the Constitution.

But what did the capitalists do when in 1933 it became clear that the maintenance of this same Republican Constitution had become incompatible with the maintenance of the economic power of *their* class? Without a second's hesitation they tore the Constitution

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to shreds. Hindenburg, who had been talking about nothing but his sacred oath to the Constitution for six years past, gave supreme power to Hitler, the man whose whole purpose in life was to destroy that Constitution, and who did at once destroy it. What did a hundred Constitutions, and a thousand sacred oaths to keep it, matter when it was a case of preserving the capitalists' ownership of factories, fields and mines? Oaths and Constitutions were but scraps of paper. Nor will any Capitalist class ever behave in any other way when once its property is threatened.

. . . . .

There is little left to tell, and nothing that bears telling. On January 30th, the day of Hitler's accession to power, the Social Democrats assured the German workers that Hitler was ruling on the basis of the Constitution. "It is still too early to fight and at present there is no reason for a General Strike" (Urich, a prominent German Trade Union leader, speaking on the evening of January 30th). They characterized the Communist call for a General Strike as "crazy talk," and issued the following official instructions to their supporters (January 31st): "Rally therefore to the Iron Front! (the Social Democratic

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Defence organization). Obey its orders and its alone."

One month later, by March 1st, the Iron Front, and all other Social Democratic Defence organizations, had been "voluntarily dissolved," without striking a blow, and the Social Democratic leaders were telling the workers that it was too late to fight. "Now everything is finished, now we can do nothing." To attempt resistance, said Kautsky, would be a "senseless adventure."

On March 4th, the Fascist National Coalition secured a majority at the "terror" elections. That majority was secured by suppressing the whole of the workers' Press, prohibiting the right of assembly almost universally, except of course for Fascists; terrorizing by blood and murder whole working-class districts, and finally, by one of the most nauseating acts of provocation in world history, the deliberate burning of the Reichstag by the Nazis. And yet, incredible as it may seem, the Social Democrats decided to keep up the pretence that the Constitution had not been violated. Even at their eleventh hour of life, they refused to attempt to offer any resistance to Hitler. And they still pretended that they did not resist in order to preserve the Constitution.

"The victory of the Government parties,"

wrote Herr Stamfer, the editor of *Voerwarts*, as soon as the result of the poll was known, "makes it possible to govern strictly in accordance with the Constitution. They have only to act as a legal Government and it will follow naturally that we shall be in a legal opposition . . . if they choose to use their majority for measures that remain within the framework of the Constitution, we shall confine ourselves to the rôle of fair critics" (Bulletin of the Social Democratic party issued immediately after the election).

Of torture, murder and tyranny, unexampled in three centuries of European history, the German Social Democrats promised to remain "the fair critics." Let this be their epitaph, for, on May 10th, 1933, Hitler seized the entire property of the Social Democratic party, and dissolved its organizations.